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POEMS



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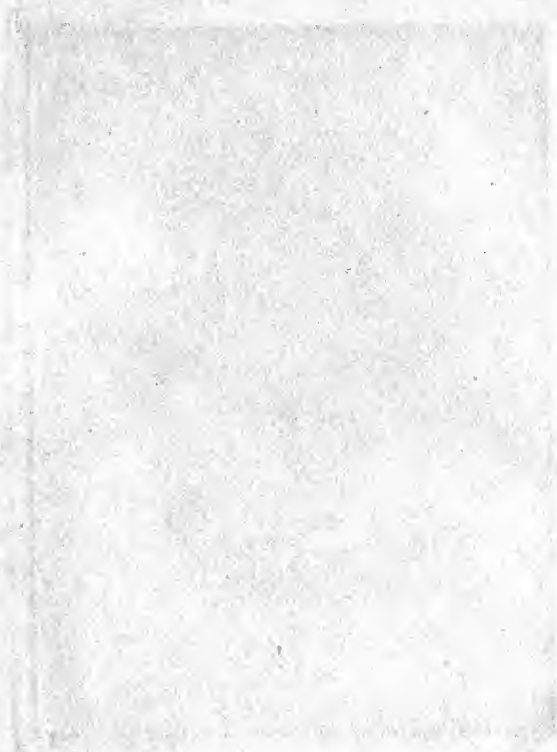
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THE POEMS OF SOPHIE JEWETT

MEMORIAL EDITION



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BIOGRAPHICAL INTRODUCTION

THE poetry of Sophie Jewett is too wide in its appeal to need interpretation through biography; and one would turn in vain to the poems for a story of her life. Yet those who have felt the sway of her art may well wish for a knowledge of her life in its personal relations and surroundings; and much of her own experience lies half-hidden in the poems. The "little fountain in the park" sings its "summer song" before her girlhood home; in her "coign of vantage" whence "wheatfield and pasture stretch in sight" she spent many August hours; White Head rises sheer from the waters of Casco Bay on which she used to sail; and she heard "the least of carols" among the "undrifted snows" of the Wellesley meadows.

Miss Jewett was born June 3, 1861, in Moravia, a little town in the hilly lake country of central New York. Among the founders of this village in early pioneer days were her grandfather, Deacon Josiah Jewett, and her great-grandfather, Cotton Skinner, whose daughter Sophia became the wife of Deacon Jewett. The family are of old New England

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stock, descendants of Joseph Jewett who, with two uncles, came to this country in 1638 and settled in Rowley, Massachusetts. Her father, Dr. Charles Carroll Jewett, married Ellen Ransom Burroughs, daughter of John S. Ransom of Salem, Connecticut, and adopted daughter of an uncle, Daniel Burroughs of Buffalo, New York.

The family homestead, then known as "Grey Cottage," lies in a spot of unusual beauty, between orchard and garden, at the foot of "West Hill." Miss Jewett's earliest years were spent in this paradise for children, and the vivid pleasure in earth and sky, in woods and water, in bird notes and in growing things, which permeates her poetry, had its root in the outdoor delights of her childhood. Her father's practice as a country physician extended over roads which climb and dip among the hills, and on any long drive one of the children usually bore him company, often this little daughter. The children had a wide playground, although its limits were clearly defined by the tall old walnut tree at the end of the lane, the great chestnut on the hillside, and the hedge about the garden. In this old-fashioned garden they made dolls of daffodils, poppies, or pine-tassels; and, indeed, they here found nearly all their playthings from the time of crocuses until the bright leaves fell. The world

as they knew it was bounded by the circling line of hills against the sky, a great world and old, where things had happened long ago, "when" as the wondering child used to say, "I was a little thread of dust." When the oldest of the three sisters began to study geography the two younger ones laid out the entire universe according to her instructions with perfect satisfaction to themselves. One of their plays was to journey to "the very outside edge of the world," and to climb the hedge which shut it in; on the world side were green grass and flowers and sunshine, on the outside darkness and tan bark — an image of desolation suggested by a tan yard near the village, the only spot in that fertile valley where nothing could grow. The little poet, the youngest of the three, more than half believed in this and could see the picture clearly in after years. Bedtime was marked by the fireflies in the garden or the crows wheeling about the top of the giant elm in the meadow, "that hour when birds leave song and children pray."

Sorrow came early to this home, and Dr. Jewett, feeling life slipping from him while his children were very young, took every care to impress upon them not only high ideals of conduct for their future guidance, but also the value and the beauty of intellectual pur-

suits, holding up as a model to his little daughters, after she was gone, their lovely and gifted young mother.

Miss Jewett's parents remained always real presences in her life and in the lives of those nearest to her; and the culture, the courtesy, the courage, and the devoutness of the parents bore fruit in the life of the daughter. After the death of Dr. Jewett, Buffalo became the home of his children, three daughters and a son. Miss Jewett's later childhood and girlhood were spent there, and there, in the home of her brother, she died, October 11, 1909, after a few weeks of illness.

In early girlhood she already showed an alert mind and an eager desire for knowledge, a desire which in no way interfered with her enjoyment of lively diversions. Chief among her teachers in school days was Mrs. Elizabeth A. Forbes, for many years preceptress of the Buffalo Seminary. Much inspiration and counsel came to her from her minister, Dr. Wolcott Calkins, whose home in Buffalo, and later in Newton, Massachusetts, she called her "second home." She was the constant comrade of his daughter from the time they met as little girls; and their companioning became a lifelong friendship. In the minister's study the two children discussed grave mysteries or bent together over books in

strange tongues, though ever ready to be lured from the deep window seat to range the house or to climb the church belfry. At home she found delight in the poets, and essayists, and historians of her father's library, old books that stood on her shelves to the end. During several years, in which she was not allowed to use her eyes, the oldest sister made a practice of reading aloud to her. The education thus begun was throughout life gained for the most part directly from books; in later years, from the great libraries of London and Oxford, Florence and Rome and Boston. Like a general she planned her own campaigns of the mind, and brought into her scholarship an individuality that does not belong to the wholly school-made product.

The friends of her girlhood she steadfastly cherished when time brought the separations constraining them "to go diverging ways." She was little more than twenty when first she journeyed to England and Italy, an experience which gave new incentive to study and filled her beauty-loving soul with new visions. Many summers and two whole years she spent in study and travel, the companion almost always of her artist sister. Her intimate knowledge of Italian art, history, and literature was nurtured by these sojourns in Italy, and many poems as well as all the prose writings of

the last ten years enshrine the country which she loved. Chief of these prose writings is "God's Troubadour," published in book form in 1910, the story of Saint Francis, told for children, in which the Little Poor Man lives his life before us from his boyhood when he sings "gay songs of love and war" to the day when he dies, "worn and weak" yet "happy and high-hearted." Notable among the shorter papers are "The Lover of Trees in Italy," published in 1903, in *Scribner's Magazine*, and a sketch, "The Land of Lady Poverty," which appeared in *The Outlook* in 1905.

In 1889, already a poet of distinct promise, Miss Jewett came to Wellesley College as instructor in English Literature, and in 1897 she was appointed associate professor. Besides a course, carried for many years, in the general history of English Literature, she taught courses in Spenser, in the history and structure of the ballad, and in the poetry of the fourteenth and of the nineteenth centuries. She concentrated her attention, in the later years, on the three lines of work last named; for, lover of modern poetry as she was, she still firmly maintained the necessity of a close knowledge of our early language and literature. Her teaching was that of the critic who is also the creator, of the scholar who is also the artist. Her knowledge was both wide

and detailed, and her passion for truth made her insistent in her search for fact and inexorable in her demand for accuracy. Thus, she would spend many hours of many days over one line of a ballad in a forgotten dialect, and would move heaven and earth to discover the force of an obscure word-ending. In the study of the poets of reflection, particularly those of the nineteenth century, she discussed with her students the great problems of thought and of life, with an understanding and an insight bred of her philosophical reading and of her own thinking. And always her teaching was a revelation of beauty and a training in the art of opening eye and ear. A true and vivid impression of her is given in the words of one of her students, now herself an instructor in literature: "In the teaching of poetry Miss Jewett was consummate. Her profound and eager scholarship was unimpeachable. It was because her facts were so sure a foundation . . . that she was able to build for us a superstructure at once so fair and so enduring. Yet we were never permitted to mistake . . . the history for the poetry. I shall never forget the gem-like radiance of 'The Pearl' as that precious poem revealed shapes and hues of beauty through her reading. . . . Miss Jewett taught poetry more poetically than any one else I ever knew."

She threw herself with enthusiasm into the give-and-take of class discussion, and had an ardent pleasure in the work of her students, spending herself with lavish generosity on individuals. Yet she felt keenly the discouragements of teaching. "It is quite impossible" she said, "to fulfil one's human and professional obligations even in a little world like mine." She was vitally interested in her courses, and devotedly loyal to department and to college; and she drew courage, inspiration, and happiness from the companionship of her fellow-workers who were also her close friends. Of her radiant hospitality, in these years of her Wellesley life, many might bear witness: the nuthatches and squirrels for whom she kept open house at her window, the students to whom, by her wood fire, she read Celtic lyrics or Sicilian ballads or the prose of Pater, and the guests who were stirred and quickened by the conversation, grave and gay, of her dinner-table.

The literary fruits of Miss Jewett's teaching, in addition to two detailed bibliographical and topical Outlines for the use, primarily, of her classes, are three: first, a critical edition, published in 1901, of Tennyson's "The Holy Grail," with an Introduction that makes careful comparison of the modern poem with the Perceval Romances and with the mediæval stories of the early history and quest of the

Grail; second, a translation, "such as only a poets' poet could have made," in the complicated original stanza, of the Middle English poem, "The Pearl"; and, third, a collection, yet to be published, of ballads transcribed and translated from many Romance languages and dialects.

Her poems came first as swift visions, fragmentary or complete. Sometimes, alas, the vision vanished beyond recovery; sometimes she caught it in its fulness and translated it into winged words; more often, words or lines or stanzas would be lacking, and she would search for them through patient days or months, never content with anything less than the right phrase, word, or metre. Most of her poems were written and re-written in many versions, differing often very little except to her delicate ear and her keen sense. A life so rich in interest, in feeling, and in friendship was of necessity creative, though her academic occupations and responsibilities sometimes checked the outflow of her poetry. Indeed, she often referred laughingly to Lowell's complaint of the distractions which teaching brings to the poet, as if a brooding hen "should have to mind the door bell." Yet the years of teaching bore a golden harvest of poetry. In 1896, she published the first collection of her lyrics, "The Pilgrim and Other Poems,"

a volume dedicated to the beloved memory of her brother-in-law, Dr. Henry Hastings Hunt. She had before this published her poetry under her mother's name, Ellen Burroughs, but "The Pilgrim" appeared with her own name. Nine years later, in 1905, a second collection was made in the volume "Persephone and Other Poems," issued by the Wellesley College Department of English Literature for the college library fund.

Miss Jewett remained always singularly shy about her poetry and very self-critical. The business of offering her verse to an editor was always particularly distasteful, and she would keep her poems in her desk for years before sending them forth. "If you honestly would not mind being post-office for me," she wrote to the friend whom she later called her "oldest and faithfulest critic," "I will copy the poem and send it to you." Even so mature and perfect a poem as "The Pilgrim" reached the publisher through this happy intermediary. Nevertheless, she had always a sense of belonging to the great fellowship. Long ago she sent to Richard Watson Gilder her poem inspired by his "New Day," and among her papers was found his letter of acknowledgment: "Tell Ellen Burroughs that one by her called a poet declares that she is a true poet and must not let her golden gift be lost."

Miss Jewett's prose as well as her poetry shows the strength of her imagination. "The sunset glory of the Arno valley" (of which she writes in "The Lover of Trees in Italy") fairly smites our eyes, and we see "the fields of rose-colored vetch and wine-dark clover, of bright poppies and pale iris," past which she drove "into a world where acacias in full flower stood white among the cypresses." This picture, intense in colour, is followed by another of delicate and clear-cut form — a picture of the "characteristic trees in Italy — detached, sharply outlined, impressive from loneliness and contrast." Her imagination was at once "the bliss" and the torment of her "solitude." With vivid fidelity she recalled faces, figures, and voices; beauty once seen was her inalienable possession. But in equally unsparing detail of colour and form, of human expression and impersonal ugliness, she saw again squalor and sickness and suffering; and with unpitying accuracy her imagination made her the witness of the crimes and catastrophes of which she read. She remembered words as accurately as scenes. As she talked, half-turning from her desk, or pausing on a walk through the hilly wood-ways of Wellesley to mark the tender spring tints of the oak branches against the blue of the lake, a rapturous line from Dante's "Paradiso" or

the refrain of a Chaucerian ballade would come to her lips, adding beauty to the world without and within. And to vision and memory she added thought. Swiftly, sometimes, but more often slowly and with careful consideration of every step, she reached her intellectual convictions by the force of her thinking. Of these results of her reasoning she often had a characteristic distrust due to the peculiar wideness of her intellectual sympathy, her understanding of opinions which she did not share, her ability to face problems from divergent points of view.

All her critics have spoken of the many-sidedness of her verse. But no mere reader of the poems could guess at the richness of her nature or divine the refreshing alternations of mood and interest which all her friends so well knew. Never poet could be on occasion more prosaic; never idealist was so realistic; never visionary was so prompt and business-like, and utterly to be depended on in the ordering of academic, social, and household detail. Most of the prose sketches suggest the rich and pathetic quality of her humour, but no record could ever be preserved of her flashing wit and her inimitable repartee. It is even harder to convey by words the sense of her bodily presence. There was something in her aspect that drew the eyes and hearts of those

who looked on her, something more than beauty of feature, stately presence, or gracious ways. One of her colleagues writes of "the refreshment of that life-communicating beauty, of that swift smile, that buoyant step," and those who saw her daily would be the first to say to the unknown friend "who never save in fancy saw her face" that sight and intimate acquaintance would have brought no disillusion, and that the reality like the dream would "set the heart aglow."

Sophie Jewett was, in truth, friend and comrade even more surely than poet and teacher. Though delicately scrupulous never to disregard "the quivering barrier line" of any soul, she was divinely quick to respond to an appeal, spoken or unspoken, for inspiration, counsel, or help. People turned to her in practical perplexity, in moral struggle, and in personal need; and her discernment, her wholesome strength, her comprehension, and her faith did not fail them. Her life centred in the tenderness and passion of her sympathy which was as wide as deep. She was touched not only by the griefs and joys of those closest to her, and not only by the needs of those with whom she came into personal contact of helpfulness, — her mission boys in the old Buffalo days, and, later, her Italian friends in the North End of Boston, — but by poverty and oppression, by sin and sor-

row, everywhere. She bore in her heart the sufferings of Russian prisoners in the fortress of Peter and Paul, of refugees from the earthquake in Messina. For this outpouring of sympathy she gladly paid the heavy price of suffering which lost no pang for its vicariousness. "I wish," she wrote, "that instead of being so good to me God would be good to some of the people who need."

Yet notwithstanding her sympathy with suffering, in the face of physical pain gallantly borne, and despite the constant dissatisfaction with her work due to her unattainable ideal of perfection, she knew the joy of living: the outdoor world remained an ever-present source of pleasure; her swift and keen humour was the compensation for many ills, an alchemy which transformed the trials and mischances of everyday life; her happiness in friendship was inexhaustible, not only her eager delight in the gladness, in the achievement, of her friends, but her pure joy in the loving intercourse of spirit with spirit. Her hope was deeply disciplined, and she distrusted all complacent and unheeding optimism: "It is," she says, "as if I felt the pain of all the coming years." But she was not, as she truly protested, "a pessimist. I begin to believe," she added, "that sorrow is the one thing that does not make people pessimistic." Her courage

and her faith were indeed deeply rooted. *Sine dolore non vivitur in amore*, she quoted from Thomas à Kempis, "and it is better, in spite of the pain, so to live." None of the poems more truly express her deepest self than the poems of faith and of vision. For deeper than her feeling of the beauty, the love, and the misery of this world, underlying her experience of its separations, was her abiding consciousness of unbroken communion and of the endlessness of the life of the spirit. "I am almost surprised" she wrote a long time ago, "to find the distinctness in my mind of the picture of the view from your windows. I see the objects that you see, I almost feel the air that you breathe. May it not be the same in the spiritual things of our friendship? And . . . if the distances of earth are powerless to separate heart from heart, why should that little space between this 'seen' and that 'unseen' be impassable?" Twenty years later she spoke the same thought in words that are the possession of all who know and love her: —

"Yet, since I need nor touch nor sight
 Nor spoken word, however dear,
 To read your thought and will aright,
 To know your spirit, now and here,
 What has our fellowship to fear?"

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THE PILGRIM

THE PILGRIM

"Such a palmer ne'er was seene,
Lesse Love himselfe had palmer beene."

NEVER TOO LATE.

PILGRIM feet, pray whither bound?
Pilgrim eyes, pray whither bent?
*Sandal-shod and travel-gowned,
Lo, I seek the way they went
Late who passed toward Holy Land.*

Pilgrim, it was long ago;
None remains who saw that band;
Grass and forest overgrow
Every path their footing wore.
Men are wise; they seek no more
Roads that lead to Holy Land.

Proud his look, as who should say:
I shall find where lies the way.

Pilgrim, thou art fair of face,
Staff and scrip are not for thee;

Gentle pilgrim, of thy grace,
 Leave thy quest, and bide with me.
 Love shall serve thee, joy shall bless;
 Thou wert made for tenderness:
 God's green world is fair and sweet;
 Not o'er sea and Eastern strand,
 But where friend and lover meet
 Lies the way to Holy Land.

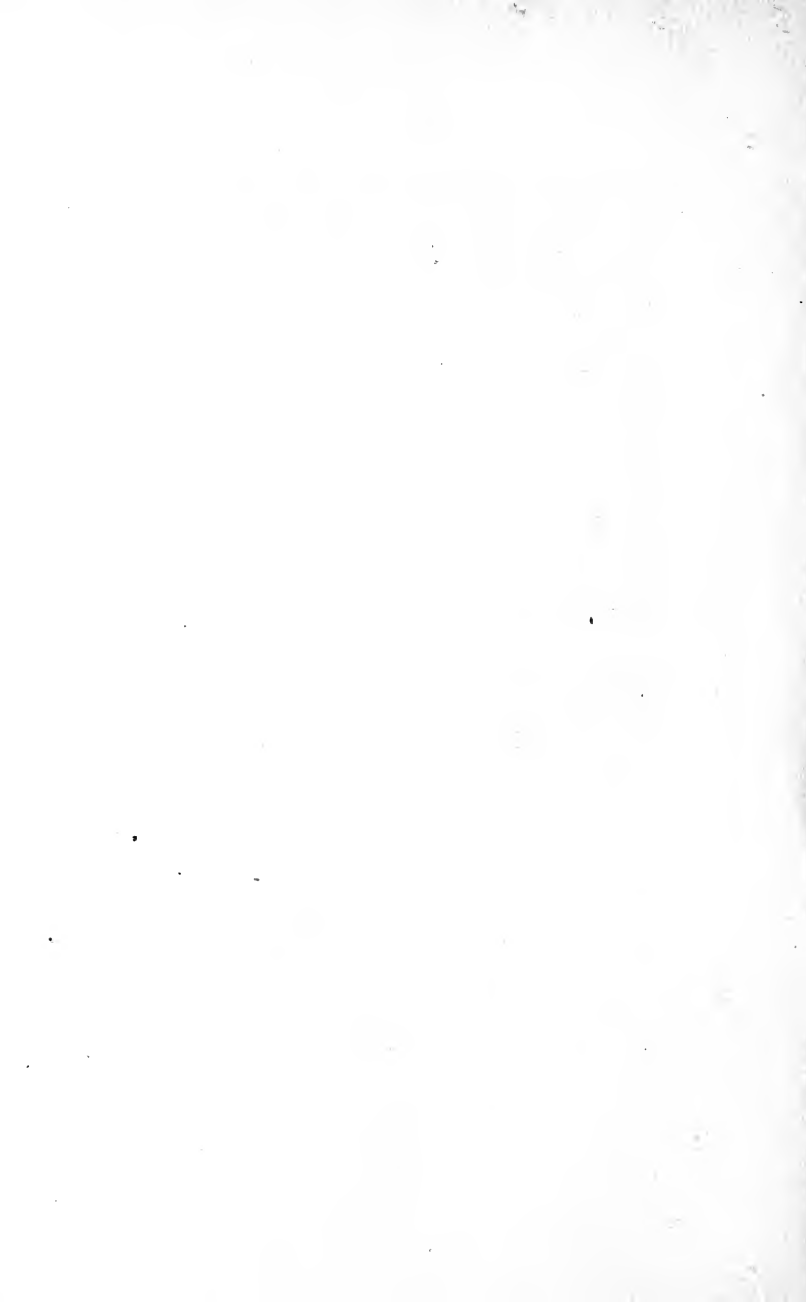
Low his voice, his lashes wet:
One day if God will — not yet.

Pilgrim, pardon me and heed.
 Men of old who took that way
 Went for fame of goodly deed,
 Or, if sooth the stories say,
 Sandalled priest, or knight in selle,
 Flying each in pain and hate,
 Harassed by stout fiends of hell,
 Sought his crime to expiate.
 Prithee, Pilgrim, go not hence;
 Clear thy brow, and white thy hand,
 What shouldst thou with penitence?
 Wherefore seek to Holy Land?

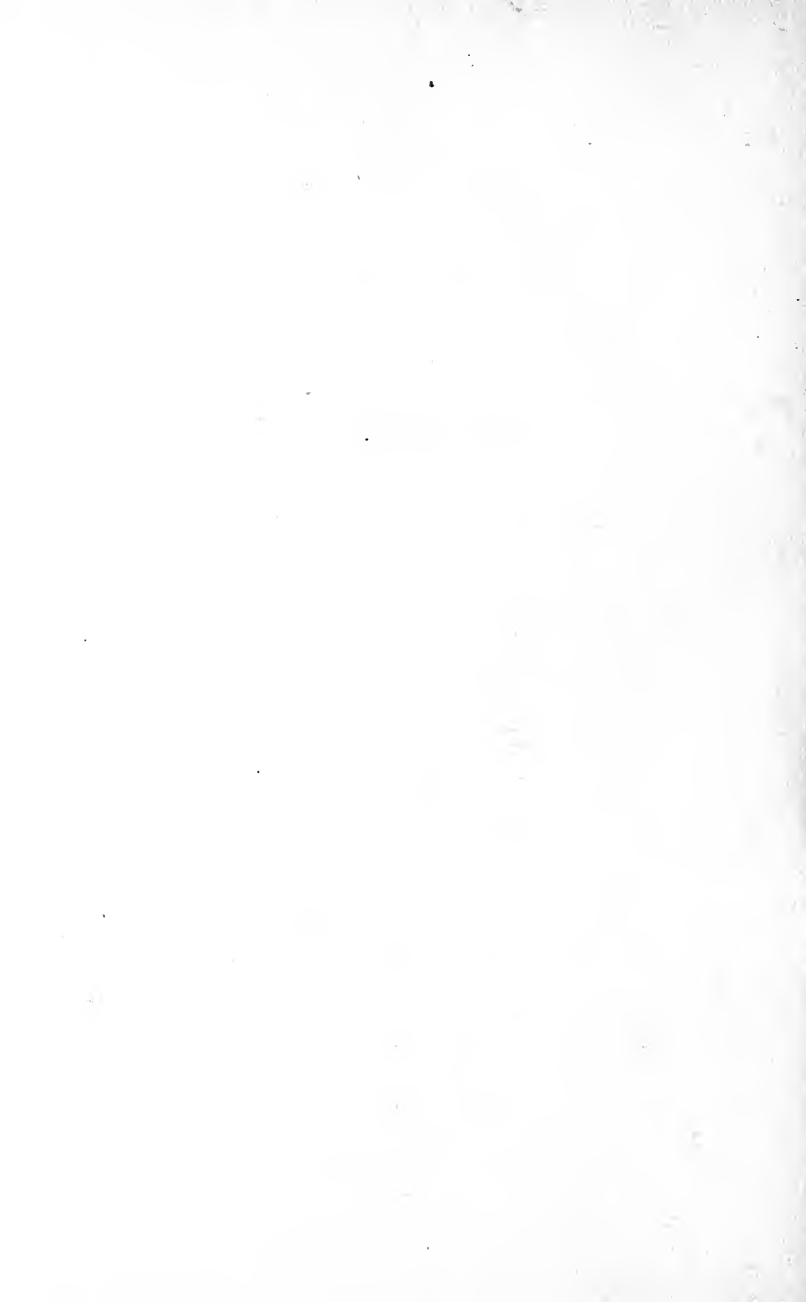
Stern the whisper on his lip:
Sin and shame are in my scrip.

Pilgrim, pass, since it must be;
Take thy staff, and have thy will;
Prayer and love shall follow thee;
I will watch thee o'er the hill.
What thy fortune God doth know;
By what paths thy feet must go.
Far and dim the distance lies,
Yet my spirit prophesies:
Not in vigil lone and late,
Bowed upon the tropic sand,
But within the city gate,
In the struggle of the street,
Suddenly thine eyes shall meet
His whose look is Holy Land.

Smiled the pilgrim, sad and sage:
Long must be my pilgrimage.



SONNETS



THE SOLDIER

"Non vi si pensa quanto sangue costa."

PARADISO XXIX. 91.

THE soldier fought his battle silently.
Not his the strife that stays for set of sun;
It seemed this warfare never might be done;
Through glaring day and blinding night fought he.
There came no hand to help, no eye to see;
No herald's voice proclaimed the fight begun;
No trumpet, when the bitter field was won,
Sounded abroad the soldier's victory.
As if the struggle had been light, he went,
Gladly, life's common road a little space;
Nor any knew how his heart's blood was spent;
Yet there were some who after testified
They saw a glory grow upon his face;
And all men praised the soldier when he died.

1894

A FRIENDSHIP

S MALL fellowship of daily commonplace
 We hold together, dear, constrained to go
 Diverging ways. Yet day by day I know
 My life is sweeter for thy life's sweet grace;
 And if we meet but for a moment's space,
 Thy touch, thy word, sets all the world aglow.
 Faith soars serener, haunting doubts shrink low,
 Abashed before the sunshine of thy face.
 Nor press of crowd, nor waste of distance serves
 To part us. Every hush of evening brings
 Some hint of thee, true-hearted friend of mine;
 And as the farther planet thrills and swerves
 When towards it through the darkness Saturn swings,
 Even so my spirit feels the spell of thine.

1888

SEPARATION

A LONG the Eastern shore the low waves creep,
Making a ceaseless music on the sand,
A song that gulls and curlews understand,
The lullaby that sings the day to sleep.
A thousand miles afar, the grim pines keep
Unending watch upon a shoreless land,
Yet through their tops, swept by some wizard hand,
The sound of surf comes singing up the steep.
Sweet, thou canst hear the tidal litany;
I, mid the pines land-wearied, may but dream
Of the far shore; but though the distance seem
Between us fixed, impassable, to me
Cometh thy soul's voice, chanting love's old theme,
And mine doth answer, as the pines the sea.

ABSENT

MY friend, I need thee in good days or ill,
I need the counsel of thy larger thought;
And I would question all the year has brought —
What spoil of books, what victories of will;
But most I long for the old wordless thrill,
When on the shore, like children picture-taught,
We watched each miracle the sweet day wrought,
While the tide ebb'd, and every wind was still.
Dear, let it be again as if we mused,
We two, with never need of spoken word
(While the sea's fingers twined among the dulse,
And gulls dipped near), our spirits seeming fused
In the great Life that quickens wave and bird,
Our hearts in happy rhythm with the world-pulse.

March 30, 1889

THUS FAR

BECAUSE my life has lain so close to thine,
 Because our hearts have kept a common beat,
 Because thine eyes turned towards me frank and
 sweet -

Reveal sometimes thine untold thoughts to mine,
 Think not that I, by curious design,
 Or over-step of too impetuous feet,
 Could desecrate thy soul's supreme retreat,
 Could disregard its quivering barrier-line.
 Only a simple Levite, I, who stand
 On the world's side of the most holy place,
 Till, as the new day glorifies the east,
 One come to lift the veil with reverent hand
 And enter with thy soul's soul face to face, —
 He whom thy God shall call to be high priest.

THOUGHTS

THE morning brought a stranger to my door.
I know not whence such feet as his may stray,
From what still heights, along what star-set way.
A child he seemed, yet my eyes fell before
His eyes Olympian. I did implore
Him enter, linger but one golden day
To bless my house. He passed, he might not stay,
And though I call with tears, he comes no more.
At noon there stole a beggar to my gate;
Of subtle tongue, the porter he beguiled.
His creeping, evil steps my house defiled.
I flung him scornful alms, I bade him straight
To leave me. Swift he clutched my fee and smiled,
Yet went not forth, nor goes, despite my hate.

CHRISTMAS

THE Christmas bells ring discord overhead;
The Christmas lights flash cold across the snow;
The angel-song fell silent long ago;
Nor seer, nor silly shepherd comes, star-led,
To kneel to-night beside a baby's bed.
Peace is not yet, and wrong and want and woe
Cry in the city streets, and love is slow,
And sin is sleek and swift and housed and fed.
Dear Lord, our faith is faint, our hearts are sore;
Our prayers are as complaints, our songs as cries;
Fain would we hear the angel-voice once more,
And see the Star still lead along the skies;
Fain would, like sage and simple folk of yore,
Watch where the Christ-child smiles in Mary's eyes.

SIDNEY LANIER

DIED SEPTEMBER 7, 1881

THE Southwind brought a voice; was it of bird?
Or faint-blown reed? or string that quivered
long?

A haunting voice that woke into a song
Sweet as a child's low laugh, or lover's word.
We listened idly till it grew and stirred
With throbbing chords of joy, of love, of wrong;
A mighty music, resonant and strong;
Our hearts beat higher for that voice far-heard.
The Southwind brought a shadow, purple-dim,
It swept across the warm smile of the sun;
A sudden shiver passed on field and wave;
The grasses grieved along the river's brim.
We knew the voice was silent, the song done;
We knew the shadow smote across a grave.

THAMYRIS

And they took from him his high gift of song, so that he forgo his harping. — ILLIAD II.

OF strong hands, as at first that hew and build;
 Of evil hearts and brave that fight and slay;
 Of feast and dance, birthday and marriage day;
 Of passion, loss, and joy of love fulfilled
 God's singers make sweet verse, and hearts song-
 thrilled

Are keener set to suffer, strive, and play.
 This poet, only, gives no heed alway,
 Though earth with life be loud, with death be
 stilled.

He strays, a shadow, wistful, through the land,
 His eyes unseeing and his head uncrowned;
 No song he makes of love, nor war, nor wine;
 No hymn, no prayer; there comes no mastering
 sound

From that sweet harp forgotten of his hand,
 Left to the vagrant fingering of the vine.

IN VITA DI MADONNA LAURA: XXII

FROM THE ITALIAN OF PETRARCH

Solo e pensoso i più deserti campi.

ALONE and thoughtful, some most desert field
 I measure with reluctant steps and slow;
 Or strive by shy, untrodden paths to go,
 Watchful and fugitive. No other shield
 Save flight I find, who fain would keep concealed
 From the world's open scrutiny the glow
 Beneath the ashes of my smile. I know
 How lightly were my heart's red fire revealed.
 I think that even hill and mountain peak,
 River and forest know of what sad kind
 Is this my hidden life; and yet I find
 That, whatsoever steepest way I walk,
 And wildest, Love himself that road will seek,
 Always, and he and I together talk.

A PETITION

WE looked to Joy as furrows to the sun
 In sowing time. Of that relentless heat
 That spares the blade to blast the ripened wheat
 How should we know, with summer but begun?
 We followed Joy, nor knew how swiftly run
 The untraceable and unreturning feet.
 That quest I have no courage to repeat;
 I am content; I ask no grace save one:
 Lord, I will bear my own heart's utmost pain;
 I will go softly, with bent, humbled head;
 I will not strive, nor cry, nor pray again,
 If Thou wilt hear in this my need extreme,
 Wilt give me once, give me though in a dream,
 To see the eyes I love be comforted.

LIMITATIONS

GOD made man to be poet, priest and seer;
 God sets no snare to wound the spirit's wing,
 But yields His thought to our interpreting
 In characters of sunlight, written clear;—
 Nay more, who walks in densest shade may hear
 From every rock the holy echoes ring,
 May bend the knee where forest thrushes sing,
 And know the Voice Eternal at his ear.
 Truth yet diviner, deep within the mind —
 His revelation since the world began —
 Hath God denied not to His friend. But man
 Fain gropes in dust the infinite to find,
 Fain peers afar the immanent to scan.
 Forgive him, Father, whom Thy light doth blind.

TO PAIN

NOT by the minutes of thin torture spun,
 Not by the nights whose hours halt and slip
 back,
 Not by the days when golden noon turns black
 Hast thou dismayed me; but that, one by one,
 Pale shadows pass me of my tasks undone,
 While, like a victim loosed from wheel and rack,
 With will unnerved, breath scant and sinew slack,
 I droop, where glad folk labour in the sun.
 And yet, O winged Inquisitor, return,
 Stay, though I cringe and cry and plead for grace,
 If thou hast more to teach, still would I learn;
 I choose, even with faint heart and quivering lip,
 Some place in the great, patient fellowship
 Of those that know the light upon thy face.

TO CATHERINE BRESHKOVSKY

IN THE FORTRESS OF PETER AND PAUL

THE liberal summer wind and sky and sea,
 For thy sake, narrow like a prison cell
 About the wistful hearts that love thee well
 And have no power to comfort nor set free.
 They dare not ask what these hours mean to thee:
 Delays and silences intolerable?
 The joy that seemed so near, that soared, and fell,
 Become a patient, tragic memory?
 From prison, exile, age, thy gray eyes won
 Their gladness, Mother, as of youth, and sun,
 And love; and though thy hero heart, at length
 Tortured past thought, break for thy children's tears,
 Thy mortal weariness shall be their strength,
 Thy martyred hope their vision through far years.

August, 1909

RONDEAUS



“IF SPIRITS WALK”

“I have heard (but not believed) the spirits of the dead
May walk again.”

WINTER'S TALE.

IF spirits walk, Love, when the night climbs slow
The slant footpath where we were wont to go,
Be sure that I shall take the self-same way
To the hill-crest, and shoreward, down the gray,
Sheer, gravelled slope, where vetches straggling grow.

Look for me not when gusts of winter blow,
When at thy pane beat hands of sleet and snow;
I would not come thy dear eyes to affray,
If spirits walk.

But when, in June, the pines are whispering low,
And when their breath plays with thy bright hair so
As some one's fingers once were used to play —
That hour when birds leave song, and children
pray,
Keep the old tryst, sweetheart, and thou shalt know
If spirits walk.

I SAW LOVE'S EYES

I SAW Love's eyes, I saw Love's crownèd hair;
 I heard Love's voice, a song across the air;
 The glad-of-heart were of Love's royal train;
 Sweet-throated heralds cried his endless reign,
 And where his garment swept, the earth grew fair.

Along Love's road one walked whose feet were bare
 And bleeding; no complaint he made, nor prayer,
 Yet dim and wistful as a child's in pain
 I saw Love's eyes.

I groped with Love where shadow lay, and snare;
 I climbed with Love the icy mountain stair;
 The wood was dark, the height was hard to gain;
 The birds were songless and the flowers were slain;
 Yet brave always above my heart's despair
 I saw Love's eyes.

November 21, 1895

ACROSS THE FIELDS

ACROSS the fields, the happy fields that lay
 Unfaded yet, one visionary day
 We walked together, and the world was sweet.
 Each heard the whisper neither might repeat,
 Love's whisper underneath our light word-play.

When fields were brown, when skies hung close and
 gray,
 Alone I walked the dear familiar way,
 With eager heart, with hurrying love-led feet,
 Across the fields.

O life that hath so bitter words to say!
 O heart so sore impatient of delay!
 O wistful hands that reach and may not meet!
 O eyes that yearn for answering eyes to greet!
 The summer comes. It wins me not to stray
 Across the fields.

I SPEAK YOUR NAME

I SPEAK your name in alien ways, while yet
 November smiles from under lashes wet.
 In the November light I see you stand
 Who love the fading woods and withered land,
 Where Peace may walk, and Death, but not Regret.

The year is slow to alter or forget;
 June's glow and autumn's tenderness are met.
 Across the months by this swift sunlight spanned,
 I speak your name.

Because I loved your golden hair, God set
 His sea between our eyes. I may not fret,
 For, sure and strong, to meet my soul's demand,
 Comes your soul's truth, more near than hand in
 hand;
 And low to God, who listens, Margaret,
 I speak your name.

November 20, 1892

MIGNONNE

FOURTEENTH CENTURY FORM

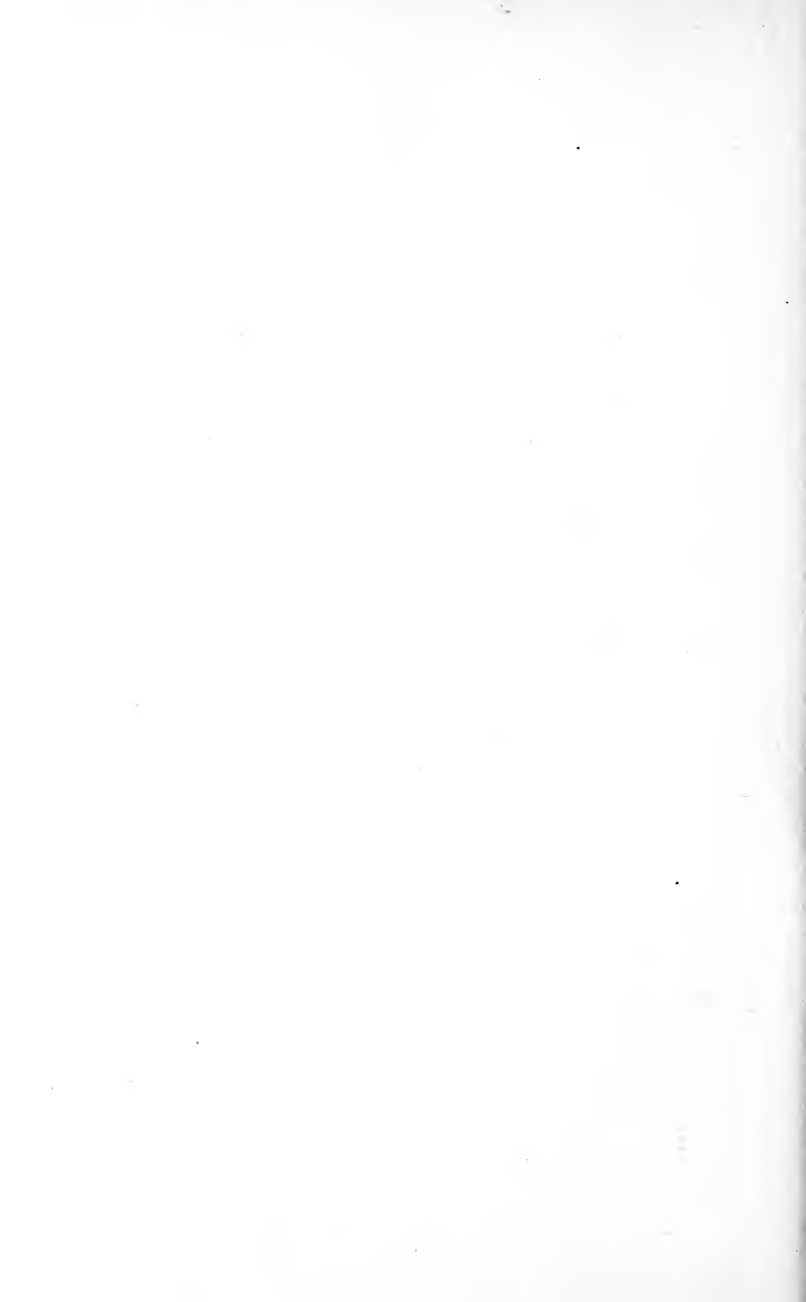
MIGNONNE, whose face bends low for my
 caressing,
 New and unknown to-night thy beauty seemeth;
 Dimly I read thine eyes as one who dreameth.

The moonlight yester-eve fell soft in blessing,
 That coldly now across thy bright hair gleameth;
 Mignonne, whose face bends low for my caressing,
 New and unknown to-night thy beauty seemeth.

As penitent, low-voiced, his sins confessing,
 Pleads where the light of the high altar streameth,
 I speak to thee, whose love my love redeemeth.
 Mignonne, whose face bends low for my caressing,
 New and unknown to-night thy beauty seemeth;
 Dimly I read thine eyes as one who dreameth.



SONGS



ARMISTICE

THE water sings along our keel,
The wind falls to a whispering
breath;

I look into your eyes and feel
No fear of life or death;

So near is love, so far away

The losing strife of yesterday.

We watch the swallow skim and dip;
Some magic bids the world be still;

Life stands with finger upon lip;

Love hath his gentle will;

Though hearts have bled, and tears have
burned,

The river floweth unconcerned.

We pray the fickle flag of truce
Still float deceitfully and fair;

Our eyes must love its sweet abuse;

This hour we will not care,

Though just beyond to-morrow's gate,
Arrayed and strong, the battle wait.

EVEN-SONG

COME, O Love, while the far stars
 whiten,
 Gathering, growing, momentarily;
Thou, who art star of stars, to lighten
 One dim heart that waiteth thee.

Speak, O Love, for the silence presses,
 Bowing my spirit like a fear;
Thou, whose words are as caresses,
 Sweet, sole voice that I long to hear.

SONG

THY face I have seen as one seeth
 A face in a dream,
 Soft drifting before me as drifteth
 A leaf on the stream:
 A face such as evermore fleeth
 From following feet,
 A face such as hideth and shifteth
 Evasive and sweet.

Thy voice I have heard as one heareth
 Afar and apart,
 The wood-thrush that rapturous poureth
 The song of his heart;
 Who heedeth is blest, but who neareth
 In wary pursuit,
 May see where the singer upsoareth,
 The forest is mute.

SONG

“O LOVE, thou art winged and swift,
 Yet stay with me evermore!”
 And I guarded my house with bolt and bar
 Lest Love fly forth at the door.

Without, in the world, 't was cold,
 While Love and I together
 Laughed and sang by my red hearth-fire,
 Nor knew it was winter weather.

Sweet Love would lull me to sleep,
 In his tireless arm caressed;
 His shadowing wings and burning eyes
 Like night and stars wrought rest.

And ever the beat of Love's heart
 As a chime rang at my ear;
 And ever Love's bending, beautiful face
 Covered me close from fear.

Was it long ere I waked alone?
A snow-drift whitened the floor;
I saw spent ashes upon my hearth
And Death in my open door.

1893

SONG

I COME across the sea,
 (O ship, ride fast)!
 True heart, I sail to thee;
 Sail home at last.
 Yet ships there are that never reach their
 haven,
 Though glad they sail;
 And hoarse laments of curlew and sea-raven
 Haunt every gale.

My ship lies at the pier
 (The tide 's at turn);
 No place she hath for fear
 From prow to stern.
 O Love, the soul shall never miss its haven,
 Though it sail far,
 Nor hoarse laments of curlew and sea-raven
 May reach yon star.

SONG

LAUGHTER that ringeth all day long
 In a world of dancing feet;
 A heart attuned to a bird's wild song,
 As eager, as wayward and sweet.
 Love, passing by, drew near and smiled:
 "Ah, dear Love, wait, she is a child!"
 Reluctantly he went his way:
 "I shall come back another day."

A heavier-drooping lid, a line
 Gentler in curving cheek and chin;
 — Lips where joys tremble, where hopes shine;
 And something more — a storm within,
 A heart that wakes to sudden fears,
 And eyes that know the use of tears:
 "Ah, cruel Love! to come and teach
 A pain that knows nor name nor speech!"

Love stands aggrieved: "Farewell, I go!
 Take back thy child-heart's unconcern."

“Nay, nay! Thou shalt not leave me so!”

She holds him fast with tears that burn.

“Sweet Love, I pray thee to abide.

If thou walk constant at my side,

Through doubt, through sorrow, through
despair,

No pain can be too hard to bear.”

SONG

LADY mine, so passing fair,
Would'st thou roses for thy hair?
Would'st thou lilies for thy hand?
Bid me pluck them where they stand.
Those are warm and red to see,
These are cold. Are both like thee?
Brow of lily, lip of rose,
Heart that no man living knows!
If one knelt beside thy feet,
Would'st thou spurn, or love him, Sweet?

SONGS FROM AN UNPRINTED
POEM

I

HAST seen the blue wave sleeping,
 sleeping,
 By gentle winds caressed?
 Hast seen the far moon ceaseless keeping
 Her watch above its rest?

Hast seen the pale moths drift together
 With wingèd seeds wind-sown?
 Hast seen the falling of gull's feather,
 Or leaf from wild rose blown?

Hast seen the white wave dancing, dancing,
 With wondrous witchery,
 Like hers who rose, men's hearts entrancing,
 From out the sun-bright sea?

Lighter than wave, or leaf, or pinion,
 Than circling moth more fleet,
 Than goddess mightier of dominion,
 The charm of rhythmic feet.

II

O day thou art so weary long!
 O night so maddening brief!
 Swift moments for life's feast and song,
 Slow hours for life's grief.

A thousand pearls the lavish sea
 Rolls up to fill my hands;
 The ebb-tide leaves but shells to me
 Empty upon the sands.

BUD AND ROSE

FOR A CHILD

IT is so small!
A cup of green, —a tiny tip
As pink as is a baby's lip,
And that is all.

But sunshine's kiss,
And rain-drops falling warm and fast,
And coaxing winds will make at last
A rose like this.

A WINTER SONG

ALL the roses are under the snow:
 Only the tips
 Of the bare, brown, thorny bushes show.

Out of sight, pretty blossoms sleep
 Sweet and sound; there are left for me
 Fairest of roses, one, two, three, —

Where do you think?

On my baby's cheeks two, pale and pink,
 And one that is ripe and red and deep,
 On my baby's lips.

All the bonnie brown birds are flown
 Far to the South.

Never a piping, fluted tone,

Never a silver, soaring song

From wood-path sounds, or meadow white;

Yet, in his hurried southward flight,

Some songster kind

Has left the sweetest of gifts behind:

Music that ripples all day long

From my baby's mouth.

All the stars have faded away;
 The blue bright skies
Show not a golden gleam to-day
 Where a thousand flashed last night;
But when the far lamps blaze again,
For the brightest you may look in vain
 (Sly truants two),
Fast hidden away from me and you,
 Under soft covers folded tight
 In my baby's eyes.

TO A CHILD

THE leaves talked in the twilight, dear;
Hearken the tale they told:
How in some far-off place and year,
Before the world grew old,

I was a dreaming forest tree,
You were a wild, sweet bird
Who sheltered at the heart of me
Because the north wind stirred;

How, when the chiding gale was still,
— When peace fell soft on fear,
You stayed one golden hour to fill
My dream with singing, dear.

To-night the self-same songs are sung
The first green forest heard;
My heart and the gray world grow young —
To shelter you, my bird.

A SONG IN SPRING

LISTEN, spring is in the air;
As of old the earth is fair;
Youth is dead, and sorrow lies
With a dream across his eyes.
Softly, swiftly, lest he wake,
Kiss again for Love's dear sake.
Nay, for Love unsmiling stands,
Holds a cup within his hands
Bright and bitter to the brim.
Who are ye dare drink with him?

A SONG IN SUMMER

IF I were but the west wind,
I would follow you;
Cross a hundred hills to find
Your world of green and blue;

In your pine wood linger,
Whisper to you there
Stories old and strange, and finger
Softly your bright hair.

WITH A DAFFODIL

LADY, I am pale and cold,
Shivering without your door,
Yet my crown of winter-gold
Poets loved and maidens wore
In days of yore.

In a fairer spot of earth,
Some dream-shrouded, sweeter year,
I, or mine, had other birth,
Woke in fields of Warwickshire,
And laughed to hear

The boyish tread of Shakespeare's feet.
Before the swallow, I and mine
Made spring for him. O Lady sweet!
Welcome, as of an honored line,
Your Valentine.

February 14, 1900

SONG

MY heart is as a still grass-hidden nest;
 O Lark, thy song is for the sky,
 the sky!

Wilt thou drop softly down to me and rest,
 Song-wearied, by and by?

/ APRIL

FROM THE FRENCH OF REMY BELLEAU

APRIL, thou art the smile
 That erewhile
 Cypris wore; and thy birth
 Is so sweet that in heaven
 The gods even
 Are breathing the perfume of earth.

'Tis thou, gracious and mild,
 Hast beguiled
 Those exiles fleet of wing, —
 Exiles long time afar,
 Swallows that are
 The messengers faithful of spring.

RUDEL'S SONG

FROM THE FRENCH OF EDMOND ROSTAND

MEN wander up and down,
 A-singing through the town
 Some chestnut, blond, or brown
 Sweetheart:
 Chestnut or brown may reign,
 Or blond, won without pain, —
 But my Love doth remain
 Apart.

He merits little things
 Who faithful sighs and sings
 When every evening brings
 His star:
 Her white hand he may press,
 Her garment's hem caress: —
 But I love my Princess
 Afar.

'T is sweet with love to burn,
Always to love and yearn,
To ask not in return

Her heart:

Love that may not attain,
Most noble when most vain!
And my Love shall remain
Apart.

A heavenly thing it seems
This love of shades and gleams;
What were life without dreams

That are

The one gift that may bless?
I dream of her caress: —
Let me love my Princess
Afar!

November 22, 1905

LA SIRENETA'S SONG

FROM THE ITALIAN OF GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

WE were seven sisters,
 Seven, and all were fair.
 We looked into the fountains,
 Each of us was fair.

"Flower of rushes makes no bread,
 Mulberry blossom makes no wine,
 Threads of grass no linen fine,"
 The mother to the sisters said.

We looked into the fountains,
 Each of us was fair.

The eldest was for spinning
 And wanted spindles of gold;
 The second was for weaving
 And wanted shuttles of gold;
 The third was for sewing
 And wanted needles of gold;

The fourth was for serving
 And wanted cups of gold;
 The fifth was for sleeping
 And wanted pillows of gold;
 The sixth was for dreaming
 And wanted dreams of gold;
 The little one was for singing,
 The youngest of them all,
 For singing, only singing,
 And wanted nothing at all.

“Flower of rushes makes no bread,
 Mulberry blossom makes no wine,
 Threads of grass no linen fine,”
 The mother to the sisters said.

We looked into the fountains,
 Each of us was fair.

And the eldest sister span,
 Twisting spindle and heart;
 And the second sister wove,
 And she wove a web of pain;
 And the third sister sewed,
 Making a poisoned shift;
 And the fourth sister served,

And she served a tainted dish;
 And the fifth sister slept,
 Slept on the pillow of death;
 And the sixth sister dreamed,
 Dreamed in the arms of death.
 The mother wept in pain,
 Wept for the evil fate;
 But the youngest one who sang,
 Singing early and late,
 Singing, only singing,
 Had ever a happy fate.

(*La Gioconda*, Act IV., Scene 1.)

THE SONG OF THE SUN

FROM THE ITALIAN OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

O LORD, we praise Thee for our
 Brother Sun,
 Who brings us day, who brings us golden
 light.
 He tells us of Thy Beauty, Holy One.
 We praise Thee, too, when falls the quiet
 night,
 For Sister Moon, and every silver star
 That Thou hast set in Heaven, clear and
 far.

For our brave Brother Wind we give Thee
 praise;
 For clouds and stormy skies, for gentle air;
 And for our Sister Water, cool and fair,
 Who does us service in sweet, humble ways;
 But, when the winter darkens, bitter cold,
 We praise Thee every night and all day
 long

For our good friend, so merry and so bold,
Dear Brother Fire, beautiful and strong.

For our good Mother Earth, we praise
Thee, Lord;

For the bright flowers she scatters every-
where;

For all the fruit and grain her fields afford;

For her great beauty, and her tireless care.

We praise Thee, Lord, for gentle souls who
live

In love and peace, who bear with no com-
plaint

All wounds and wrongs; who pity and
forgive;

Each one of these, Most High, shall be
Thy saint.

(Incomplete)

NATIVITY SONG

ADAPTED FROM THE LATIN OF JACOPONE
DA TODI

THE beautiful mother is bending
Low where her baby lies,
Helpless and frail, for her tending;
But she knows the glorious eyes.

The mother smiles and rejoices
While the baby laughs in the hay;
She listens to heavenly voices:
"The child shall be king, one day."

O dear little Christ in the manger,
Let me make merry with thee.
O King, in my hour of danger,
Wilt thou be strong for me?

THE LEAST OF CAROLS

L OVELIEST dawn of gold and rose
 Steals across undrifted snows;
 In brown, rustling oak leaves stir
 Squirrel, nuthatch, woodpecker;
 Brief their matins, but, by noon,
 All the sunny wood's a-tune:
 Jays, forgetting their harsh cries,
 Pipe a spring note, clear and true;
 Wheel on angel wings of blue,
 Trumpeters of Paradise;
 Then the tiniest feathered thing,
 All a-flutter, tail and wing,
 Gives himself to caroling:

“Chick-a-dee-dee, chick-a-dee!
 Jesulino, hail to thee!
 Lowliest baby born to-day,
 Pillowed on a wisp of hay;
 King no less of sky and earth,
 And singing sea;

Jesu! Jesu! most and least!
For the sweetness of thy birth
Every little bird and beast,
Wind and wave and forest tree,
Praises God exceedingly,
Exceedingly."

December, 1904.

OTHER LYRICS



5

WHEN BEAUTY DIES

SHOULD change fall in its fated hour;
Should music cease, should darkness be;
Should star and sun and face and flower
Turn dust of beauty endlessly,
Belovèd, what of you and me?

I question how, by finer sense,
The soul adventures ways unknown,
Or what shall be its recompense
For death? what loveliness atone
For earth's green glory sadly flown?

Yet, since I need nor touch, nor sight,
Nor spoken word, however dear,
To read your thought and will aright,
To know your spirit, now and here,
What has our fellowship to fear?

Man's age-long doubt assails in vain
The truth that lightens in your eyes,
Or your still courage, bred of pain:
Beyond the wreck of worlds and skies,
I shall seek these, when beauty dies.

THOUGH UNSEEN

FROM the dwelling-place of the Holy
Dead

Wilt thou come back to me?

O Love, it is far

To that glad, great star

Whose shining hath hidden thee!

"Neither in star nor sun," she said,

Her voice as it oft had been,

"The dwelling-place of the Holy Dead,

Nor dreamer nor saint hath seen."

Lost Love of mine, where we walked of yore

Thy feet made hallowed ground;

Now earth is earth,

Here are death and birth,

But where is the glory found?

Low at my side her voice once more,

"Dull are thine eyes," she said;

"Walk with me now as we went of yore,"

And I walk with the Holy Dead.

October 9, 1894

AWAKENED

I PRAYED for other life to come,
 You prayed for sleep.
 We passed. The sentinels were dumb,
 The road was steep.

I have forgotten days and hours;
 I found you, late,
 Asleep where grow tall nameless flowers
 Within the Gate.

To shimmering heights of amethyst
 A bright path led;
 Far off I saw through silver mist
 The blessèd dead.

Those holy hills where souls rejoice
 Seemed flint and sand,
 If I must go without your voice,
 And miss your hand.

No less for me all Paradise
Were dust and thorn,
Should I in your awakening eyes
See pain reborn.

I feared to touch your shining hair,
To breathe your name;
I waited while the golden air
Brightened to flame.

Across your eyes the glory fell;
They opened wide, —
How beautiful I may not tell, —
How satisfied.

DEFEATED

WHEN the last fight is lost, the last
sword broken;
The last call sounded, the last order spoken;
When from the field where braver hearts
lie sleeping,
Faint, and athirst, and blinded, I come
creeping,
With not one waving shred of palm to
bring you,
With not one splendid battle-song to sing
you,
O Love, in my dishonor and defeat,
Your measureless compassion will be sweet.

A DREAM

LAST night, what time dreams wander
 east and west,
 What time a dream may linger, I lay dead,
 With flare of tapers pale above my head,
 With weight of drifted roses on my breast;
 And they, who noiseless came to watch my
 rest,
 Looked kindly down and gentle sentence
 said.

One sighed "She was but young to go
 to-day;"
 And one "How fiercely life with death
 had striven
 Ere God set free her spirit, sorrow-
 shriven!"
 One said "The children grieve for her at
 play;"
 And one, who bent to take a rose away,
 Whispered "Dear love, would that we
 had forgiven."

SLEEP

DEAR gray-eyed Angel, wilt thou
come to-night?

Spread the soft shadow of thy shelter-
ing wings,

And banish every hint of thought and
light,

And all the clamoring crowd of waking
things?

Wilt thou bend low above wide weary eyes,
As o'er the worn world bend the tireless
skies?

SANGRAAL

TASTING the wine of death he found
it sweet;
Drank deeper draughts and only smiled
the more;
As if he touched the hand that held the cup,
As if he saw the Christ look down on him,
Content he whispered, "Lord, I drink to
thee."

1884

GABRIEL

"That annunciation namèd death."

"**I** KNOW thee, Angel, though thou
 dost not wear,
 As thou wast wont, the glory and the
 gold
 That smote upon the poet's gaze of old.
 Thou Messenger! What tidings dost thou
 bear?

"I know thee winged and vested thus in
 gray,
 Not clouds of heaven and night of earth
 disguise
 The light supernal of thine awful eyes.
 O Angel, linger, speak to me who pray!"

Almost I seemed to hold and to let slip
 The angel's robe; I know the gray wings
 cast

Shadow about me; yet he smiled and
 passed,
 That word of God a-quiver on his lip.

When morning came, one died whom I
 held dear;
 The angel's smile lay on his quiet face;
 For him who pleaded not had been the
 grace,
 The word ineffable I wait to hear.

1895

MIDWINTER

ALL night I dreamed of roses,
Wild tangle by the sea,
And shadowy garden closes.
Dream-led I met with thee.

Around thee swayed the roses,
Beyond thee sang the sea;
The shadowy garden closes
Were Paradise to me.

O Love, 'mid the dream-roses
Abide to heal, to save!
The world that day discloses
Narrows to one white grave.

EASTER

NO fear of death, or life, again shall
pass
Along these quivering fields of April grass,
Where, under quiet, ever holier skies
Sorrow keeps watch with glad, immortal
eyes.

1905

IN THE DARK

LORD, since the strongest human hands
 I know
 Reach through my darkness, will not let
 me go,
 Hold me as if most dear when fallen most
 low;

Since, even now, when my spent courage
 lies
 Stricken beneath disastrous, quivering
 skies,
 I learn the tenderness of human eyes;

Surely, though night unthinkable impend,
 Where human hands nor human eyes be-
 friend,
 Thou wilt avail me in the lonely end.

VISION

WHEN earth, and sea, and sky spread
fair

In flawlessly transparent air;
When every blade of grass was kind,
And my own joyous peace of mind
Seemed part of a world-mood serene
Where restlessness had never been,
Too soon there stirred a wind of change,
A doubt that made the beauty strange,
A fear, mist-like, in-drifting dim,
Because I nowhere met with Him.

But when the flesh and spirit quailed
For very pain; when the will failed;
When, far from tenderest voice or hand,
I crept into a desert land
Of haggard grass and thorns, wherein
Was lonely covert for my sin;
When, even my grief turned faint and dumb,
I waited what new ill might come,
In that transfigured, awful place,
Did I not see Him face to face?

BRIEF LIFE

HE came with the wind of dawn, when
 rose-red clouds were flying;

 In the glory of his coming the old world
 drifted dim.

He went when the evening star outwatched
 day's quiet dying;

 Its path upon the sea made a white
 straight road for him.

Did he dream a wistful dream in some
 radiant place supernal?

Did he hear the human call, follow and
 lose his way?

Has the touch of earth on the child made
 strange to him things eternal?

Is he heir to sorrow and love, being mortal
 for one swift day?

OF TRANSIENT BEAUTY

ROSE-FLOWER and flower of grass
 and flower of flame
 Drift to the Beauty whence their beauty
 came;
 Fainter are they, more brief, than this June
 wind,
 Yet for the impalpable grace they leave
 behind
 The years may fashion an immortal name.

June 24, 1909

POMPEII

OF death and time and silence softly
 wrought,
 Beauty, effacing horror, healing pain,
 Lies on the mountain slopes and fills the
 plain,
 Quickens each sense and lulls each ques-
 tioning thought.
 Where broken shaft and empty shrine have
 caught
 Wan glory of sunlight, ruin seems as gain;
 And pitiful the little lives, and vain,
 That loved, that played, and feasted, sold
 and bought.

(Unfinished)

AN EXILE'S GARDEN .

I LIVE in the heart of a garden
 With cypresses all about;
 To the east and west, and the south and
 north,
 Straight shadowy paths run out.

There are ancient gods in my garden;
 They have faces young and pale;
 And a hundred thousand roses here
 Enrapture the nightingale.

Yet, among the gods of the garden,
 The roses and gods, I think,
 Daylong, of a far-off clover field,
 And the song of a bob-o-link.

FROM OVER-SEA

to ———

IN Italy how comes the spring?
 I look across wide fields of snow
 To naked woods, and long to know
 How fair the shimmering mountains lie?
 How warm above them bends the sky
 Of Tuscany?
 What word from Rome the swallows bring,
 Swift sent to thee?
 Here stirs no life of bud nor wing;
 The trees by icy winds are torn;
 And yet I dream how flowers are born
 In Italy.

I see the far, fair city swim
 Through mists of memory bright yet dim
 Shining, even as it shone of old
 Through Arno's haze of subtile gold,
 By witchery

Of distance, light and evening spun.

Tall cypresses against the sun

Distinct I see,

Defiling darkly up the hill,

As when we wandered at our will

In Italy.

SUNSET ON THE CAMPAGNA

THE pines have no voice this ineffable
hour,

The sea and the Dome shine through
wavering gold;

Here, where stood temple and palace and
tower,

Shadows and grass lie in fold over fold,

Hiding meek hearts that were masterful,
living;

Hiding mute lips that were loud with
complaint;

Mother of all, is it scorn or forgiving

That covers so tenderly sinner and
saint?

Mountains keep watch like strong angels
of pity;

Mist on the plain lies more light than a
kiss;

Eyes that were dust before Rome was a
 city,
 Eyes that love brightened, saw these,
 yet not this.

Not the same wonder, not the same glory,
 Other, not lovelier, sunset and morn;
 Neither can thought find an end to the
 story
 Of youth for whose rapture the world is
 newborn.

1901

VENICE IN APRIL: A MEMORY

A GONDOLA motionless lying
 Under the Arsenal wall;
 A weary boatman at stern and at bow
 Supinely stretched half asleep;
 And you with eyes merrily deep
 Silent to mine replying,
 'T is sweet to remember how.

We had floated far that day,
 That happiest day of all!
 The circling silver mountain-rim
 Shut us safe from the world away;
 Though eyes we loved were hurt and dim,
 There came to us nor cry nor call,
 Where, idle-oared, content we lay
 Under the Arsenal wall.

On the ripple a quivering crescent
 Tossed like a tortured thing,
 But, far above, serene,
 It hung in the curve of the sky;
 At our prow was the gentle, incessant

Sound of the waves' caress,
Impelled by the light breath wandering by
From some ocean god unseen
In his palace of idleness;
And ever from two bell-towers
Rang out the quarter-hours,
In broken harmonies
Like the changes in a chaunt:
Sounds to stay in one's ears and haunt
One's dreams with perplexing memories.

Shoreward or seaward making,
The boats passed lazily;
We watched one golden sail that flew
(Its fellow-flock forsaking)
Before our eyes like a butterfly,
Afar where the sea-breeze fresher grew;
How it seemed to beckon from out the blue
Of the mystical, deepening southern sky,
Till we longed to follow, we two!

The fair day loitered to its close,
The boatmen awakened, the play-time was
done;
The wide air turned to gold and rose,
And where we watched a passing rower,

We saw the water run
Drop by drop from his gleaming oar,
Opal and pearl and amethyst.

Eastward and westward grew the light;
San Marco's domes were floating mist;
The Campanile's slender height
Stood pale against one purple cloud,
Down which the sun dropped suddenly,
Piercing it through with a golden shaft.
We were silent now, none spoke nor laughed;
Only the bells anon rang loud,
Ever repeating to you and to me:
"The story is ended, the dream is o'er,
You may carry away beyond the sea
A picture, and nothing more."

And yet, might the dream of a dream avail,
'T were good to dream it over again;
To forget the years that lie between,
To be careless of heart as then;
To see the glow of that warm rose light,
Feel the hush of that air serene;
Once more down the silvery, far lagoon,
Under opal sky and crescent moon,
To follow that golden sail.

IN UMBRIA

Perumbra
UNDER a roof of twisted boughs
 And silver leaves and noon-day sky,
 Among gaunt trunks, where lizards house,
 On the hot sun-burnt grass I lie;
 I hear soft notes of birds that drowse,
 And steps that echo by

Unseen, along the sunken way
 That drops below the city-wall.
 Not of to-day, nor yesterday,
 The hidden, holy feet that fall.
 O whispering leaves, beseech them stay!
 O birds, awake and call!

Say that a pilgrim, journeying long,
 From that loud land that lies to west,
 Where tongues debate of right and wrong,
 Would be "The Little Poor Man's"
 guest;

Would learn "The Lark's" divine "Sun-Song,"

And how glad hearts are blest.

Say: "Master, we of over-seas

Confess that oft our hearts are set
On gold and gain; and if, with these,
For lore of books we strive and fret,
Perchance some lore of bended knees
And saint-hood we forget;

"Still, in one thought our lips are bold —
That, in our world of haste and care,
Through days whose hours are bought and
sold,

Days full of deeds, and scant of prayer,
Of thy life's gospel this we hold:
The hands that toil are fair.

"Therefore, forgive; assoil each stain
Of trade and hate, of war and wrath;
Teach us thy tenderness for pain;
Thy music that no other hath;
Thy fellowship with sun and rain,
And flowers along thy path."

Thou dost not answer. Down the track
 Where now I thought thy feet must pass,
 With patient step and burdened back
 Go "Brother Ox" and "Brother Ass."
 A mountain cloud looms swift and black,
 O'ershadowing stone and grass.

The silver leaves are turned to gray;
 There comes no sound from hedge nor
 tree;
 Only a voice from far away,
 Borne o'er the silent hills to me,
 Entreats: "Be light of heart to-day;
 To-morrow joy shall be.

"The glad of heart no hope betrays,
 Since 'Mother Earth' and 'Sister Death'
 Are good to know, and sweet to praise."
 I hear not all the far voice saith
 Of Love, that trod green Umbrian ways,
 And streets of Nazareth.

WHITE HEAD

PRONE on the northern water,
That laps him about the breast,
Like the Sphinx in the sand, forever
The giant lies in rest.

The sails drive swift before him,
And the surf beats at his lip,
But the gray eyes look out seaward
Noting nor wave nor ship.

The centuries drift over,
He marks not with smile nor frown,
Drift over him cloud and sea-gull,
Swallow and thistledown.

I, of the race that passes,
Quick with its hope and its fear,
Lean on his brow and question,
Plead at his senseless ear:

“What of thy past unmeasured?
And what of the peoples gone?
What of the sea’s first singing?
What of the primal dawn?

“What was the weird that bowed thee?
How did the struggle cease?
Out of what Titan anguish
Issued thy hopeless peace?”

Nothing the pale lips utter,
What hath been, nor what shall be;
Under the brow’s stern shadow,
The gray eyes look to sea.

The blue glows round and over,
Thin-veiled, as it were God’s face;
I feel the breath, the spirit,
That knows nor time nor space.

And my heart grieves for the giant
In his pitiful repose,
Mocked by the vagrant gladness
Of a laggard brier-rose;

Mocked to his face from seaward
By the flash and whirl of wings;
Mocked from the grass above him,
By life that creeps and sings.

I care not for his wisdom,
His secret unconfessed;
I yearn toward rose and cricket,
Ephemeral and blest.

Ah! if he might, how would he
Quicken to love and to tears;
For my immortal minute
Barter his endless years!

He rests on the restless water,
And I on the grasses brown,
Drift over us cloud and sea-gull,
Swallow and thistledown.

CASCO BAY

VESPERS

THE robins call me sweet and shrill:
 "Come out and fare afield;
 The sun has neared the western hill,
 The shadows slip down sure and still,
 But in our meadow wide and wet
 There's half an hour of sunshine yet;
 Come down, come down!" Who
 would not yield?

Across the road and through the lane,
 Where buttercups grow tall and bright
 With daisies washed in last night's rain, —
 Beyond the open bars I gain
 An angle of the rude rail-fence,
 A perfect coign of vantage, whence
 Wheat-field and pasture stretch in sight.

The cows, with stumbling tread and slow,
 One after one come straggling by,
 And many a yellow head falls low,
 And many a daisy's scattered snow,
 Where the unheeding footsteps pass,

Is crushed and blackened in the grass,
With brier and rue that trampled lie.

Sweet sounds with sweeter blend and strive:
In its white prime of blossoming
Each wayside berry-bush, alive
With myriad bees, hums like a hive;
The frogs are loud in ditch and pool,
And songs unlearned of court or school
June's troubadours all round me sing.

Somewhere beneath the meadow's veil
The peewee's brooding notes begin;
The sparrows chirp from rail to rail;
Above the bickering swallows sail,
Or skim the green half-tasselled wheat
With plaintive cry; and at my feet
A cricket tunes his mandolin.

High-perched, a master-minstrel proud,
The red-winged blackbird pipes and
calls,
One moment jubilant and loud,
The next, to sudden silence vowed,
Seeks cover in the marsh below;
Soft winds along the rushes blow,
And like a whisper twilight falls.

IN HARVEST

MOWN meadows skirt the standing
wheat;
I linger, for the hay is sweet,
New-cut and curing in the sun.
Like furrows, straight, the windrows run,
Fallen, gallant ranks that tossed and bent
When, yesterday, the west wind went
A-rioting through grass and grain.
To-day no least breath stirs the plain;
Only the hot air, quivering, yields
Illusive motion to the fields
Where not the slenderest tassel swings.
Across the wheat flash sky-blue wings;
A goldfinch dangles from a tall,
Full-flowered yellow mullein; all
The world seems turning blue and gold.
Unstartled, since, even from of old,
Beauty has brought keen sense of her,
I feel the withering grasses stir;
Along the edges of the wheat,
I hear the rustle of her feet:
And yet I know the whole sea lies,
And half the earth, between our eyes.

WHEN NATURE HATH BETRAYED
THE HEART THAT LOVED HER

THE gray waves rock against the gray
sky-line,
And break complaining on the long gray
sand,
Here where I sit who cannot understand
Their voice of pain nor this dumb pain of
mine;

For I, who thought to fare till my days end,
Armed sorrow-proof in sorrow, having
known
How hearts bleed slow when brave lips
make no moan,
How Life can torture, how Death may
befriend

When Love entreats him hasten, — even I,
Who feared no human anguish that may
be,
I cannot bear the loud grief of the sea;
I cannot bear the still grief of the sky.

IN APRIL

ALL day the grass made my feet glad;
I watched the bright life thrill
To each leaf-tip and flower-lip;
Swift winds that swept the hill,
In garden nook light lingering, shook
The budding daffodil.

I know not if the earth have kept
Work-day or festival:
The sparrow sings of nestling things,
Blithely the robins call;
And loud I hear, from marsh-pools near,
The hylas at nightfall.

ACROSS THE BORDER

I have read somewhere that the birds of fairyland are white as snow. — W. B. YEATS.

WHERE all the trees bear golden
flowers,
And all the birds are white;
Where fairy folk in dancing hours
Burn stars for candlelight;

Where every wind and leaf can talk,
But no man understand
Save one whose child-feet chanced to walk
Green paths of fairyland;

I followed two swift silver wings;
I stalked a roving song;
I startled shining, silent things;
I wandered all day long.

But when it seemed the shadowy hours
Whispered of soft-foot night,
I crept home to sweet common flowers,
Brown birds, and candlelight.

FEBRUARY

LAST night I heard a robin sing;
And though I walked where woods
were bare,

And winds were cold, life quivered there,
As if in sleep the heart of spring
Were moved to dim remembering.

To-day no promise haunts the air;
I find but snow and silence where
Last night I heard a robin sing.

AT SEA

SO many eves the sun must sink within
The westward plain of shoreless,
homeless sea;

So many morns, as if from heaven to
heaven,

From out the widening water in the east
The sun must rise; so many summer days,
Full in the face of the unveilèd sky,

The ship must float, till even the strongest
gull,

Deserting, wheels to track a land-bound
sail.

So many days! Yet there shall come a
day —

Some golden, holy, August afternoon —

When, tired of sea at eve and sea at morn,
The sun shall droop like a contented child,
And sleep among the cradling hills of home.

A LAND-WIND

THE lichen rustles against my cheek,
But the heart of the rock is still;
With chattering voice the cedars speak,
Crouched gray on the barren hill.

A land-wind snarls on the cliff's sheer edge,
Below, the smitten sea
Comes fawning over a sunken ledge,
And cowers whimperingly.

In the sultry wood lies a restless hush,
Not a twitter falls from the sky;
Hidden are swallow, sparrow, and thrush,
And the sea-birds only cry.

THE WHITE STORM

THE snow and the high spray mingle;
They swirl round the beacon-head;
And the sea on cliff and shingle
Calls for his hundred dead.

The mothers hear who have listened,
Trembling, through every gale,
Lest the sons in sorrow christened
Be named in the yearly tale.

For, crew by crew in his rages,
And man by man through deceit,
He has reckoned their best scant wages,
And to-night he cries for the fleet.

The good fleet sailed when the morning
Laughed and beckoned them forth;
Never a bird gave warning,
Nor a whisper from out the North.

They are cunning in wind and weather,
But what may the wisest know

When sea and sky together
 Are a sightless waste of snow?
 From shoreward and seaward driven,
 From skyward a falling cloud,
 Immeasurable, unriven,
 Gathers the frozen shroud?

Headland and beacon hiding,
 Liner from fishing-boat;
 Sailor from sailor dividing,
 Coiling round eyes and throat.

.
 Ashore the wind goes wailing
 And the twisted cedars moan;
 In vigil unavailing
 The women sit like stone.

They shall find their voice of sorrow
 When the wild, white nights are past;
 When, some golden April morrow,
 Glutted and glad at last,

The sea that quiet lingers
 And smiles round the beacon-head,
 With pitiful lips and fingers
 Fondles his hundred dead.

RIVER AND BIRD

FLOWETH the river still and strong;
Flitteth the bird swift-winged along
Its crested wave with joyous song.

The bird is a creature of air and light;
Skyward she taketh her circling flight,
Leaving the broad stream out of sight.

What though the mighty river frets
With broken voice? Of long regrets
Light hearts know little. The bird forgets.

Weary at last of all things fair;
Weary of soaring everywhere;
Weary of heaven, and earth, and air;

Discontent in the song she sings —
Cometh the bird from her wanderings
Back to the river to dip her wings.

.
Stealeth the noon-hush far and wide;
Smileth the sun on the river's tide;
Dreameth the bird in the shade beside.

.
My love is the river still and strong;
Thy heart is the bird that flits along
Wave and ripple, with joyous song.

DESTINY

A NOISOME thing that crawls by
 covert path,
 For glad, unfearing feet to lie in wait;
 No part in summer's fellowship it hath,
 From mirth and love and music alienate.

Yet once it flashed across the close, brown
 grass
 In the noon sun, and, as it quivered
 there,
 The spell of beauty over it did pass,
 Making it kin with earth and light and
 air.

I knew that Life's imperial self decrees
 That this, the loathliest of living things,
 By patient ways of cycled centuries,
 Slow creeping, shall at last attain to
 wings.

~~+~~ A JOURNEY

UPROSE the Day when Night lay dead,
 She turned not back to kiss his cheek,
 But o'er the sombre eastern peak
 She soared, and touched it into red.

Her strong wings scattered mist and cloud,
 As swiftly toward the highest blue,
 Unhindered, radiant, she flew.
 She sang for joy; she laughed aloud.

"The midmost heaven," she cried, "is
 mine!
 The midmost heaven and half the earth.
 A million joys I bring to birth,
 Upon a million lovers shine!

"I paint the grape, I gild the corn,
 I float the lilies on the lake,
 I set a-thrill in field and brake
 Fine strains of tiny flute and horn.

“Ah, it is sweet,” she said, and passed,
 Exulting still, down the sheer slope
 Of afternoon. Her heart of hope
 Went with her, dauntless, till, at last,

Upon the far low-lying range
 Of hills, she spread a crimson cloud;
 From the pale mists she tore a shroud,
 And, sinking, faint with sense of change,

She seemed to see a face bend o’er
 With kind, familiar eyes. She said:
 “Can it be you I left for dead?
 Can it be Night?” and spoke no more.

Night wrapped her in his mantle gray;
 He kissed the quivering lids that slept;
 He bowed his silver head and wept —
 “How could she know, my love, my Day?”

GHOSTS

I SLEPT last night and dreamed,
 I woke and cried,
 For in my sleep it seemed,
 Close by my side,
 Walked still and slow the old days that
 have died.

All ghostly slow they passed,
 All ghostly still;
 Of old who fled so fast,
 With life a-thrill,
 With laughing lips and eyes, with eager
 will.

So ghostlike, yet the same,
 Each dear dead day,
 Softly I called her name
 And bade her stay;
 Softly she turned and smiled and went her
 way.

ANSWERED

I MARVEL how youth could be bold
to say:

“If but this thing might come my heart
were blessed;”

To offer every treasure life possessed,
Gladly, in one supreme exchange.

To-day,
I give God thanks, yet know not how to
bear

The exceeding bitterness of answered
prayer.

THE WATCHER AND THE WIND

THE WATCHER

WILD singer at my casement, be
thou still!

In pity let me sleep;

For I am weary, and thy voice is shrill;

We have no tryst to keep.

Go on thy way; to gladder hearts than
mine

Thy song perchance were glad;

To me if thou must come, come with sun-
shine,

For night is over sad.

THE WIND

Nay listen, listen thou so fretfully pleading
for rest;

Those whom I rock may sleep:

I rock drowned men in ocean cradled deep,
And birds in frozen nest.

A SMILING DEMON OF NÔTRE DAME

QUIET as are the quiet skies
 He watches where the city lies
 Floating in vision clear or dim
 Through sun or rain beneath his eyes;
 Her songs, her laughter and her cries
 Hour after hour drift up to him.

Her days of glory or disgrace
 He watches with unchanging face;
 He knows what midnight crimes are done;
 What horrors under summer sun;
 And souls that pass in holy death
 Sweep by him on the morning's breath.

Alike to holiness and sin
 He feels nor alien nor akin;
 Five hundred creeping mortal years
 He smiles on human joy and tears,
 Man-made, immortal, scorning man;
 Serene, grotesque, Olympian.

PAN AND PSYCHE

(A PAINTING BY SIR EDWARD BURNE-JONES)

SWEET Psyche, hath thy quest of Love
 So led thee to a sterile land,
 Only to grief and fear at last?
 What stranger this who bends above
 Thy beauty? What unshapely hand
 Hides in the glory of thy hair?
 Pale wanderer, thy long sorrows past,
 May find no solace in those eyes,
 Though wistfully they scrutinize
 Thy face, and, dimly, know it fair.

Go thou thy way bright Love to find;
 And in the bliss of his embrace
 Thou shalt forget Pan's dusky face.
 Go thou thy way bright Love to find;
 While Pan, forsaken, like a brute
 Turns to his fare of nut and root;
 Yet change hath passed on the dark mind:
 Nor god nor beast now, from his flute
 Low human music haunts the wind.

THE MADONNA

THE years may enter not her shrine;
 Forever fair and young she stands,
 And with her gracious, girlish hands
 Folds tenderly the child divine.

Her lips are warm with mother-love
 And blessedness, and from her eyes
 Looks the mute, questioning surprise
 Of one who hears a voice above

Life's voices, — from the throng apart,
 Listens to God's low-whispered word
 (Strange message by no other heard),
 And keeps his secret in her heart.

Sweet maiden-mother, years have fled
 Since the great painter dropped his
 brush,
 Left earth's loud praise for heaven's kind
 hush,
 While men bewailed him, early dead,—

Yet mothers kneel before thee still
Uplifting happy hearts; or, wild
With cruel loss, reach toward thy child
Void arms for the Christ-love to fill.

Time waits without the sacred spot
Where fair and young the mother stands;
Time waits, and bars with jealous hands
The door where years may enter not.

HOLY EARTH

ALICE GORDON GULICK

Buried in the Civil Cemetery, Madrid

BLEAK burial place of the unshriven
dead,

Where exile, heretic, and felon lie:
Here never dirge is sung, nor prayer is said,
Nor priestly blessing; yet stray flowers burn
red

Above great hearts that found it good
to die.

The wind, complaining, may not break
their rest,

For outcast and forgotten slumber deep;
But the little, nameless babies, unmothered
and unblessed,

Are crying softly, softly in their sleep.

Honored to-night and hallowed is the spot,
Because of one who comes its guest to be,
Who knew no alien race nor alien lot,

Who chose her grave with these whom
earth forgot,

Bringing them fellowship from over sea.

The sweet wind sings above their place of
rest,

And wrong and shame and sorrow slum-
ber deep;

And the little, nameless babies, mothered
at last and blessed,

Are laughing softly, softly in their sleep.

A GREETING

MY day was sordid and perplexed,
 Close circled by the commonplace;
 And late I walked with spirit vexed,
 And sense of self-disgrace;
 For life and I were out of tune;
 I did not see the rose-like flush;
 I did not feel the kindly hush
 Of waning afternoon.

Its glory all around me lay,
 While yet I paced in discontent;
 When, suddenly, from far away,
 A quivering flash was sent;
 It thrilled my heart, it stayed my feet,
 A beacon sure and glad it shone,
 The last red gleam of day upon
 Your westward window, Sweet.

And straight I knew the world was fair;
 I heard a robin's prophet song;

I drank the bright wine of the air;
 My pulse grew quick and strong;
 Not wasted seemed the day's work done;
 Not hopeless seemed the thing I sought;
 The far-off heights of toil and thought
 Seemed worthy to be won.

COMMUNION

DUSK of a lowering evening,
Chill of a northern zone,
Pitiful press of worn faces,
And an exiled heart alone.

Warm, as with sun of the tropic,
Keen, as with salt of the sea,
Sweet, as with breath of blown roses,
Cometh thy thought to me.

ENTRE NOUS

I TALK with you of foolish things and
wise,
Of persons, places, books, desires and
aims,
Yet all our words a silence underlies,
An earnest, vivid thought that neither
names.

Ah! what to us were foolish talk or wise?
Were persons, places, books, desires or
aims,
Without the deeper sense that underlies,
The sweet encircling thought that neither
names?

INSCRIPTIONS

I. IN A BOOK OF OLD SONGS

DEAR, were you in a garden old,
 Loved of brave troubadours
 Who praised your hair's bewildering gold,
 That glimmers and allures,
 The greatest, wondering on your face
 Between the ilex trees,
 Might touch his lute and thrill the place
 With sweeter songs than these.

II. IN THE BOOK THAT YOU HAVE READ

I NEED no penciled margin line;
 By subtler emphasis,
 Page after page, I can divine
 Your thought of that and this.

I know that here your grave lips smiled
 The smile that Beauty brings;
 And here you listened where some wild
 Age-smitten forest sings.

Here your brow wore the world-old pain
No poet may forget;
And here you stayed to read again;
Here, read through lashes wet.

So, leaf by leaf, until, I deem,
Your darkened eyes forsook
One shining page, because your dream
Was lovelier than the book.

WITH A COPY OF WHARTON'S
"SAPPHO"

And of Sappho few, but all roses. — MELEAGER.

ROSES, full-hearted as of old
When Meleager garlanded
Blossom and bough of poets dead,
Lie here, and with them, daintily,
Frail scattered petals, crimson, gold,
Drift to the feet of you and me
Unfaded, — even such vain, brief things
(Roses of Pæstum, Helen's tears)
As lover loves, and poet sings,
And wise earth hoards through myriad
years,
Careless when some star disappears.

Lover and poet, to your hands
Red rose and golden rose I trust,
Attar distilled in sunnier lands,
Curled petal, sweet immortal dust.

A HEARTH-FIRE VERSE

A DIM, drowned world, where, dull
 and cold,
 Earth men and women groped of old;
 A live coal brought in fennel reed
 From the forbidden heaven of Zeus;
 And swift on every hearthstone lit
 Sky-flame for homely human use;
 Sky-joy for drooping spirit's need,
 Solace for those who lonely sit,
 Loud mirth for folk who feast and sing,
 Welcome for tired folk wandering.

Gift of the Titan's heavenly quest,
 Keep this house ever bright and blest.

December 13, 1904

FOR A BIRTHDAY

CORNELIA FRANCES BATES, AET. 79

LONG ago sweet songs were sung
 Of fair ladies ever young;
 Weary years of war might be,
 Wearier wanderings over sea,
 Exile in sad lands and strange,
 Yet their beauty might not change.
 Not a single word is told
 Of a Helen who grows old;
 Not her thousand sorrows dare
 Dull the light of Deirdre's hair;
 Iseult, lovelier than report,
 Maiden in her father's court,
 Grown world-radiant shall be seen
 Through all time, Iseult the Queen.

Deirdre, Helen, Iseult are
 Fadeless, shining star by star;
 If their poets I might bring,
 Skilled to touch the harp and sing,

Lady, I would bid them praise
Your brave crown of golden days;
Blithe and sweet their song should be,—
Song of her who graciously
With each soft year younger grows,
As the earth with every rose.

December 7, 1905

TO —

MADONNA mia! if in truth
Our Raphael from heaven's palaces
Might lean across the centuries
That have not marred his glorious youth,

Nor dimmed the lustre of his hair,
Nor dulled his pencil, rather grown
Diviner, working near God's throne,
Even he might find a study fair

As his last fresco in the skies,
Might pause untouched of mortal taint
One infinite half hour to paint
The motherhood in your dear eyes.

METEMPSYCHOSIS

I WATCH thy face, Sweetheart, with
half belief
In olden tales of the soul's wayfaring;
I marvel from what past thy young eyes
bring
Their heritage of long entailed grief.

I watch thy face and soft as through a
dream
I see not thee, but some fair, fated Greek,
Whose carven lips grow flesh straight-
way and speak
Stern words and sad, with perfect curves
that seem

But as the cynic sweetness of thy smile,
Set quivering over tears in self-despite.
Again I watch by mystic taper-light,
Where a pale saint doth kneel a weary
while;

I hear the murmured passion of her prayer,
 Imploring heaven for boon of sacrifice;
 I read behind the rapture of her eyes
 A look which thou didst teach me unaware.

The visions pass; the light, but now so
 faint,
 Flames red and sudden over field and
 brook;
 Thy face is turned, full fronting me with
 look
 Worn never yet of cynic nor of saint;

And now amid fierce Northern battle-glare,
 Where wounded heroes wait the gods'
 decree,
 The Valkyr rides, and o'er her brow I see
 The floating golden glory of thy hair.

Sweet spirit, pilgrim through the cycled
 years,
 Dear though thou art I may not bid
 thee stay;
 I bless thee whatsoever chartless way
 Thou goest, God-impelled. I have no
 fears.

I know thou wilt surrender not to pain;
 Thou wilt look never forth from coward
 eyes;
 Thou would'st not barter truth for Paradise;
 Thou could'st not think that ease and
 peace were gain.

Far off, I know, the darkness shall be
 light
 For him who scorneth to make terms
 with Fate;
 Far off for thee, Belovèd, there must wait
 The answered question, and the finished
 fight.

A LETTER

THE last light falls across your pictured face

(Unansweringsweet face, half turned away),
 Withdrawing still, as down the west apace
 Fades too the profile of June's longest day.
 I wonder, did you watch an hour ago
 While dropped the sun behind the mountain line?

And did you think how it, retreating so,
 Must blaze along this level world of mine?
 Love, what have I to do with sunset skies,
 How red soever? All the world for me
 Spreads eastward, and before my spirit's
 eyes,

Set fair between the mountains and the sea,
 Doth stand the distant city of my heart.

Forgive me if I tell myself in vain:
 "There is no power in this wide world to
 part

Our souls. Avail not time nor space nor
pain,

For love is unconditioned." Dear, to-night,
I am like an unlessoned child, who cries

For the sweet sensual things of touch and
sight;

I want to read the gladness in your eyes;

I want your voice though but to speak my
name;

My heart uncomforted, unsatisfied,

Hath put my best philosophy to shame.

Yet if you crossed the shadows to my
side, —

No vision, but your very self indeed, —

I should not ask what kindly fate had
brought

My heart's desire. I should not find at
need

Expression for one eager waiting thought,
Not one of all the words I have to say.

I should but lean my cheek upon your
hand,

And hold you close, the old, mute, childish
way,

And you would comfort me and understand.

But not to-night,—I will be patient, Sweet,
Sit silently, and let life have its will.

The tread of the last passer in the street
Sounds with the chiming hour, then all is
still,

Save that the little fountain in the park
Sings lazily the same old summer song
You knew in quiet nights when winds lay
furled.

I needs must dream alone here in the dark
A little while, to-morrow go forth strong,
Lifting the shield of Love against the world.

June 19, 1888

TO-DAY'S DAUGHTER

WRITTEN FOR THE GRADUATING CLASS AT
SMITH COLLEGE, JUNE, 1885

I

O VERY fair and strong she stands
to-day,
This youngest daughter to receive her
dower;
I see the wise World-mother smiling lay
Gift after gift before her, bid her choose
The richest, purest, rarest, lest she lose
One happiness, one power.

II

Thou wise World-mother! it was long to
wait
Hoarding thy treasures while the slow
years passed,
Keeping thy cherished plan inviolate
With thine inscrutable, sweet smile, until
This golden hour has risen to fulfil
Thy dearest wish at last

III

For this thy child, a woman earnest-eyed,
Who wears thy gracious favors worthily,
Pledges her honest faith, her constant pride,
To live her life as one who holds in trust
God's gold to give again, who fearless
must
Face the great days to be.

IV

Naught is denied her: mind alert, intent;
Eyes that look deep into the heart of
things;
A skilful hand to shape; a firm will bent
On purposes that have no petty ends;
A strength that falters not for foes nor
friends;
A soul that has swift wings.

V

Deep has she read of poet and of priest;
Wit of philosopher and lore of sage;

And science, with its growth of great from
least,
Who bids earth's cowering, secret things
appear,
And stand out in this latter sunshine,
clear
As type upon God's page.

VI

Yet finds she wiser teachers, friends more
dear,
In shadowy wood-path and on clover
slope;
When the June twilight slow and still
creeps near,
And rocks put on their purple majesty;
When stars across the dark tell glim-
meringly
Her happy horoscope.

VII

And sometimes, when the low moon lies
asleep
On its cloud-bed, like a fair child, play-
spent,

Across the river-fields and up the steep
 Come, silent stealing through the silver
 mist,
 Strange visitors, whose holy lips have
 kissed
 Death's own, yet are content.

VIII

Wide eyes that seem to bring from far-off
 years
 Their loves and hopes and tragedies
 again;
 And voices sadly cadenced to young
 ears,
 Yet musical with old-time gentleness;
 And smiles that half conceal and half
 confess
 Some unforgotten pain.

IX

And one with voice that hath a dauntless
 ring,
 Saith, "From thy life, Sweet, may the
 gods avert

The need of this strange gift I dare to bring,
 A Roman woman's strength, who will
 not spare
 A quivering death-wound at the heart
 to wear,
 And say it doth not hurt."

X

Speaketh a voice whose sound is of the sea:
 "Oft have I paced the beach, while
 sheer above
 Towered the rocks, waiting immutably
 As my heart waited. From Inarimé,
 Across the years, Vittoria brings to-day
 Her gift of tireless love."

XI

As starlight comes through myriad miles
 of space,
 Undimmed, untarnished, waxing never
 old,
 So shineth (nor can centuries efface)
 One light set in the sky of time afar,
 Thy soul, Antigone, that like a star
 Burneth with flame of gold.

XII

Antigone, what woman were not glad
 To feel against her life the touch of
 thine?
 To meet thine eyes, so unafraid, if sad?
 To hear thy words, to clasp thy potent
 hand?
 To read thy womanhood as a command
 To sacrifice divine?

XIII

Yet past nor present can avail to fill
 This woman's thoughts, who leans and
 listens best
 To voices of the future, calling shrill,
 With strain and stress of troubled des-
 tinies,
 Content she leaves her dreams and reveries
 For life's sublime unrest.

XIV

With steadfast step she walks in darkened
 ways
 Where women's curses sound, and
 children's cries;

Her gentleness shall win, her strength shall
 raise,
 Her love shall cleanse, her righteous
 words shall burn,
 And wasted, piteous baby-lips shall
 learn
 Glad laughter from her eyes.

XV

Shadow shall shrink, and sunlight shine for
 her;
 And love shall touch her life like a
 caress;
 And loyal human hearts shall minister
 To her heart's need, who hath for joy,
 for pain,
 For sorrow's mourning, ay! and for sin's
 stain
 Unending tenderness.

XVI

Around her closes, quivering and
 tense,
 Life's narrow circle of perplexities;

The clamoring hours, the hurrying events;
 Yet shall she pass through tumult and
 through crowd
 Serene, as one who hears God's voice
 ring loud
 Across far silences.

.

Who climbs life's mountain walks with
 tardy tread,
 For love of flowers that smile about his
 feet,
 For love of pines that whisper overhead,
 For love of wandering bird-calls, shy
 and sweet;
 Yet where the birds come not, beyond the
 pines,
 Past rock and steep and cloud, the final
 height
 Forever rises silent, stainless white,
 Where shadow never falls, where latest
 shines
 The lingering light.

THE COMMON CHORD

A POET sang, so light of heart was he,
A song that thrilled with joy in
every word;

It quivered with ecstatic melody;
It laughed as sunshine laughs upon the sea;
It caught a measure from each lilting
bird;

But though the song rang out exultantly,
The world passed by, with heavy step
and loud,

None heeding, save that, parted from
the crowd,

Two lovers heard.

There fell a day when sudden sorrow
smote

The poet's life. Unheralded it came,
Blotting the sun-touched page whereon he
wrote

His golden song. Ah! then, from all remote,
 mote,

He sang the grief that had nor hope nor
 name

In God's ear only; but one sobbing note
 Reached the world's heart, and swiftly,
 in the wake

Of bitterness and passion and heart-
 break,

There followed fame.

SIDNEY LANIER

"Let my name perish: the poetry is good poetry, and the music is good music; and beauty dieth not, and the heart that needs it will find it." — SIDNEY LANIER (letter to his wife).

BEFORE his eyes forever shone afar
 The beauty that his strong soul loved
 and sought,
 And fast he followed it nor looked behind;
 No way too long, too rugged, nor too dark
 For his intent, fixed will. Close after him
 Sorrow and Pain sped on in swift pursuit;
 He felt their hard hands clutch to hold him
 back;
 Their breath was hot upon his fevered
 cheek;
 His eyes were weary, and his feet dropped
 blood;
 He fell at last, and yet, they were too
 late,
 For folded close in his weak hand he held

The prize their strength was impotent to
wrest.

Upon his forehead, growing white and chill,
His Love, his Art laid gentle hands that
blessed,

And on his spirit fell his Master's peace.

TO RICHARD WATSON GILDER

AM not I too a poet, though so low?
 A little one whose songs are but
 child-cries;
 A half-fledged sparrow who with weak
 wings tries
 The God-wide air that larks have win-
 nowed, — flies
 For shame beneath the hedges.

This I know

When in a certain book to-night I read
 How a true poet pleads: Call him not dead,
 Who, straying through the fields of Para-
 dise,
 Hath met with Keats and known him by
 his eyes, —
 Sudden my own eyes filled and my heart
 said:
 “O Poet, what if in that world divine
 Our Keats should know those poet-eyes
 of thine,

And claim with thee a spirit's brotherhood
In love of beauty? What if Dante should
(Hearing: On earth this bard writ *The*
New Day)

Turn his grave, searching eyes on thee and
say:

'Thy young world hath fair ladies, sure,
and good,
And thou hast been Love's liegeman true
like me,
But walked, methinks, a somewhat easier
way.' "

When God's true poets meet above the
skies,

Above all wrong and failure, it may be
They deign to speak, with gentle words
and wise,

Of those left singing yet a little while
(Here in the shadow, singing to the sun)
They weigh the good attempted, the good
done,

And, hearing a true note, look down and
smile.

January, 1888

TO A DEAD POET

UNCHANGED, serene, the Roman
sky

Watches where Shelley's ashes lie;
About his grave slow ivy creeps,
On stone and wall and cypress sleeps
The silentness of four score years;
Yet, somewhere, Shelley's spirit hears,
Indignant, sorrowful, elate,
The story of the Narva Gate;
And, somewhere, Shelley's eyes look forth
On that white city in the North,
Beholding how the snow lies red
With blood of her most holy dead.

Tumultuous heart, yet wise as age
To read the far, sublime presage!
Though snow, new fallen, fold away
That piteous blood of yesterday;
Though a mad people, blind, betrayed,
Wreak blood with blood, thou, unafraid,
Must see no less a lovelier earth
Slowly from chaos brought to birth.

These many years the joyous sea
 Encircles reborn Italy,
 But thy clear message flashes still,
 Kindling men's hearts to deathless will,
 Lighting men's holier thought and speech,
 Yet impotent always to teach
 One lesson to crowned bigotry.

O prophet, prophet! dost thou see
 How "Northern Anarchs" cringe and hide
 To-day, like peasants terrified,
 Under the patient, scornful sun,
 Bourbon by Romanoff outdone?
 I think thou hast no eyes for these,
 So transient are earth's tyrannies;
 Only the stricken hope divine
 Reaches that high abode of thine;
 And thou art glad among thy peers
 To see men offer blood and tears,
 Exile and life, in sacrifice,
 Even as of old.

Thy southern skies
 Know the keen call of battling truth;
 Poet, in thine immortal youth,
 Come back to us one hour and sing
 The grief and glory of this thing!

January 23, 1905

GOD AND THE SINGER

I

GOD sat in heaven when all the harps
were still;

God leaned and listened, listened toward
the earth;

Tall angels stood with finger upon lip.

Only the stars were singing as at first.

God's voice in heaven was like a mourning
stream:

"I hear the sound of laughter among men,
I hear the sound of trade, of war, of grief;
I miss the sound of singing among men."

God called his swiftest angel: "Gabriel,
Go seek me out a singer on the earth,
And bid him make me music of men's deeds."

When Gabriel's wings were silent in far air,
God said: "Let play," and all the seven-
stringed harps

Made joy in heaven.

II

The singer knelt before God's throne in
heaven,

Abashed and weary, with a broken lute;
And all the harps were still because God
spoke.

God's voice in heaven was like the wistful sea:

"My singer, I have waited for thy song."

The singer spoke in heaven: "Have pity,
Lord!

Thine angel bade me wander through the
world,

To make thee music of the deeds of men.

And I went gladly, ever fain to sing;

And my lute whispered: 'Master, let us make

Songs of brave men in battle, fighting wrong

And loving death, for such songs please

God's ear.'

I stood among the greatest of earth's folk,

Where armies mustered, and where ships
set sail,

And where the wise took counsel, so to hear

Some theme of glory, and beneath my hand

I felt my lute a-thrill." The singer bent

Lower, and hid his face from God in heaven.

"I learned no theme of honor and great
death;

Lord, strong folk trample weak folk for
bright gold,

And wise folk outwit simple for bright gold,

And liberty is trafficked for bright gold,

And no man thinks of glory, nor of thee."

God bowed his head in heaven; the angels
wept.

"I might not make thee music of men's deeds,
But my lute whispered: 'Master, let us
make,

Since God is love, a new song of men's love.'

And I went gladly, thinking how for love

Bird mates with bird and man with maiden
still,

As when the world was young. Beneath
my hand

I felt my lute strings warm. But, when I
sang,

Men laughed aloud in the great market-
place,

Crying: 'Thou fool! We sell love for
bright gold!'

Then, Lord, my lute strings broke under
my hand.

The lute no more gave counsel, but my
heart

Said: 'Yonder men are praying in the
church.

Go, and make God sweet music of men's
prayers.'

And I went gladly, knowing song is prayer.

But when I knelt before thine altar, Lord,

My heart grew wise and terrible, and said:

'That priest beneath the cross serves for
bright gold,

That kneeling prince is perjured for bright
gold,

And poor men beg and shiver at the door.'

Then I crept forth between the beggars,
dumb.

"I might not make thee music of men's
prayers,

O Lord, nor of men's loves, nor of men's
deeds.

Behold! my lute is broken, and my heart."

God's voice in heaven was like a silver reed:

"Arise, my singer, thou must forth again;

I know that there is music on my earth."

The singer stood and spoke out bold in
heaven:

“O Lord, if thou wilt send me forth again,
I will not go to the great folk and strong.

Find me some simple country on thy
earth,

The least and poorest, so its fields be green,
Where I may watch men laugh, and weep,
and love;

Where I may heal my heart, and mend my
lute,

And sing to thee of birds and beasts and
flowers,

And sing to thee of clouds and winds and
seas;

And when I have forgotten greed and gold
May haply make thee music of men’s
hearts.”

And now all heaven grew fairer, for God
smiled.

God called his angel of the sweetest name:

“Go, Raphael, thou shalt lead my singer
forth.

Find him my poorest land where fields are
green,

That he may heal his heart, and mend his
 lute,
 And sing to me of birds and beasts and
 flowers,
 And sing to me of clouds and winds and
 seas,
 And, after, make me music of men's hearts."
 Singer and angel bowed before God's
 throne
 And went their way. Then all the seven-
 stringed harps
 Made joy in heaven.

III

Again God sat in heaven when harps were
 still.
 God leaned and listened, listened toward
 the earth;
 The angels stood with finger upon lip;
 Only the stars were singing as at first.
 God's voice in heaven was like the wind in
 June:
 "I hear my singer in a small, green land,
 Listen, he makes me music of men's hearts."

THE SHEPHERDS



THE SHEPHERDS

First Shepherd, a youth:

I saw a wonder as I came along:
Out of the sky there dropped a shining
song.
I do not know if stars in heaven have
wings;
But look, and listen! there it soars and
sings.

Second Shepherd, an old man:

My eyes are dazzled, for the light is
strong.

The Angel:

I bring good tidings, Shepherds, have
no fear:
The Saviour of the whole world is come
near.
A child is born to-night in Bethlehem
Who brings great joy to all, and most to
them
Who are most poor. The King! The
King is here!

First Shepherd:

Where is his palace? Can we find the
way?

Second Shepherd:

We have had kings enough. Must we
go pay
More taxes to a new one?

The Angel:

Come and bring
The love of simple hearts unto this king.

Third Shepherd, a man of middle age:

I could bring only tears where a child lay.

First Shepherd (aside):

Why can he not forget his year-old pain?

Second Shepherd (aside):

Hearts that break slowly will not heal
again.

The Angel:

Good-will, good-will and peace to all the
earth!

Born in a cattle stable, lo! his birth
Is holy. King of Love, he comes to reign.

Third Shepherd:

When harvests fail, and all the sheep
are dead,
And little children cry and cry for bread,
Grow tired at last, and sicken and lie
still,
Will any sing of peace there and good-
will
To us who watch beside an empty bed?

First Shepherd:

I think that when the King of Love is
grown,
And hearts of men are loving like his
own,
He who has gold will with his brother
share;
There will be bread and wine and fire to
spare;
For who can love, yet sit and feast
alone?

Second Shepherd:

Quick let us go! These dim old eyes
would see
A king who comes in peace and poverty.

First Shepherd:

I see a hundred white stars drifting down;
They circle yonder over Bethlehem town.

Chorus of Angels:

Glory to God! Good-will to men shall
be.

THE DWARF'S QUEST

A BALLAD



THE DWARF'S QUEST

SIR DAGONET was sad of heart;
Beneath the city gate
He watched King Arthur's knights depart;
He watched in love and hate.

He saw great tears fall from the eyes
Of Lancelot and the King;
He thought: "Apart the sweet Queen lies,
And knows no comforting."

Sir Percivale and Galahad
Rode by in shining mail;
He marked their eyes, assured and glad,
And cursed the Holy Grail.

Though many passed and saw him not,
He hoarded, in his pain,
A smile from sad Sir Lancelot,
Three sweet words from Gawain.

King Arthur's fool was Dagonet,
An impish, mocking thing;

His wont by day to carp and fret,
At night to dance and sing.

The foot and fist of rude Sir Kay
He bore with jest and sneer;
But wept to meet on any day
The eyes of Guinevere.

That night he sat without the gate,
Close by the city wall,
Till King and court, returning late,
Climbed sadly toward the Hall.

He thought of all the good knights bent
On unknown, wandering ways;
He thought of feast and tournament,
And laughter of old days.

He would not enter with his King;
He heard the warder call,
Yet waited, crouched and shivering,
Beside the city wall.

Crooked and weak was Dagonet,
What might to him avail
The hope whereon high hearts were set,
To find the Holy Grail?

Yet ice and flame were in his breast;
 He hid his curling lip,
 And wept for fierce desire to quest
 With the great Fellowship.

On nameless, shining paths afar,
 Where'er the vision bade,
 He saw them ride, — saw like a star
 The face of Galahad.

Then on his heart fell unforgot,
 More soft than April rain,
 The smile of sad Sir Lancelot,
 The sweet words of Gawain.

And Dagonet the jester laid
 His face against the stone,
 And prayed to Him who once had prayed
 In blood and tears alone;

And lo! a strange voice reached his ears,
 Borne on soft-drifting wings;
 'T was gentler than Queen Guinevere's,
 'T was kinglier than the King's.

It spake: "Thou foolish one, look up!
 Believe, and be thou glad;

There waits one vision of the Cup
For thee and Galahad."

But Dagonet cried: "Lord, to me
What may thy grace avail,
Since, late, in wrath and misery,
I cursed the Holy Grail?"

Low in the dust knelt Dagonet;
The sweet voice filled the air:
"Thy cursing lips I do forget,
Because of thy heart's prayer."

Next day 't was told through Camelot,
With pity or with jest,
That Dagonet the dwarf came not
Because he rode the Quest.

Next day and next, for many a day,
Sir Dagonet rode hard;
Sometimes deep forest blurred his way,
Or swollen torrent barred;

But everywhere the bright spring laid
Her gold about his feet;
And every hour the high Quest made
Hope at his heart stir sweet.

At hermitage and castle gate
 He asked, alway in vain:
 Nor Lancelot had passed of late,
 Nor Bors, nor good Gawain.

Now once it chanced that his path ran
 Along a riverside,
 Till, where a chestnut wood began,
 He saw the ways divide.

And close beneath the roadside cross
 There lay a wounded knight;
 His blood was black upon the moss,
 And dimmed his armor bright.

Sir Dagonet bent low and gazed
 In eyes that knew him not;
 Then, weeping, to his heart he raised
 The head of Lancelot.

.

Past midnight, when the moon was set,
 And utter dark the night,
 Round Lancelot and Dagonet
 There shone a sudden light.

And in the light, soft-footing, came
 Four maidens grave and pale;
 In lifted hands that burned like flame,
 One bore the Holy Grail.

Unveiled the Holy Chalice gleamed;
 Sweet odors filled the air;
 The roadside cross an altar seemed,
 The winds were chant and prayer.

The dwarf knelt low in that blest place,
 Adored, and trembled not;
 Then, with swift sorrow on his face,
 He turned to Lancelot.

He cried: "My lord, awake and see!
 Methinks thy quest is done!
 The Holy Grail doth shine on thee
 More bright than moon or sun!"

Sir Lancelot groaned, but spake no word;
 He had nor voice, nor will;
 Perchance the heavy eyelids stirred
 One moment, and were still.

Swift as it came the vision went;
 The dwarf moaned bitterly:

“My answered prayer is punishment
Since my lord might not see!”

He groped to find where the cross stood,
There was no ray of light;
He prayed: “Thou to the fool art good,
Be gracious to the knight.”

He cried and prayed beneath the cross,
With foolish words and wild;
But Lancelot upon the moss
Slept like a little child.

And in the dawning of the day
The dwarf forgot to weep,
Seeing how fair Sir Lancelot lay,
A-smiling in his sleep.

Sir Dagonet fell on his knee;
He fingered head and limb;
And said: “The Grail was shown to me,
Its healing was for him.

“He will awaken whole and strong
As ever he hath been;
He need not know his trance was long,
Nor what the fool hath seen.”

He sprang to horse: "Farewell, Sir Knight,
 Thy high vow shall not fail;
 Some happier day thou shalt alight
 Upon the Holy Grail."

When birds from sky and tree and ground
 Sang loud and broke his rest,
 Sir Lancelot rose blithe and sound
 To fare upon his quest.

But fast while morning hours were cool,
 And slow when noon waxed hot,
 Sir Dagonet, King Arthur's fool,
 Rode back to Camelot.

At Camelot, with boisterous cries,
 Men asked him of his quest,
 Till something in the rider's eyes
 Silenced the merry jest.

Sir Dagonet dwelt with the court;
 He mused on what had been;
 By night he made them goodly sport;
 By day he served the Queen.

.

One slow, still morn of summer's prime,
 Through fields of yellow grain,
 With saddened brow, before his time,
 Rode back the good Gawain.

But when the long nights of the year
 Darkened, and word came not,
 Sir Dagonet and Guinevere
 Prayed for Sir Lancelot.

.

Like swallows when winds first blow sweet,
 The knights came one by one;
 Each told of travail and defeat,
 And how his quest was done.

Till, when the third bright June befell,
 And nightingales were glad,
 From out the east came Bors to tell
 Of young Sir Galahad,

How won was the most Holy Quest:
 How Percivale and he
 Were laid 'neath sacred earth to rest
 In Sarras over sea.

For Galahad brave eyes were wet,
And gentle Percivale;
None ever heard how Dagonet
Achieved the Holy Grail.

THE DAUGHTER OF JORIO
A PASTORAL TRAGEDY

FROM THE ITALIAN OF GABRIELE D'ANNUNZIO

(UNFINISHED)

THE PERSONS OF THE TRAGEDY

Lazaro di Roio, Candia della Leonessa, Aligi, Splendore,
Favetta, Ornella, Maria di Giave, Vienda.

Teodula di Cinzio, La Cinerella, Mònica della Cogna, Anna
di Bova, Felàvia Sèsara, La Catalana delle Tre
Bisacce, Maria Cora.

Mila di Codra.

Femo di Nerfa, Ienne dell' Eta, Iona di Midia.

The Old Herb Woman, the Treasure Seeker, the Saint of
the Mountains, the Demoniac Boy.

A Shepherd, another Shepherd.

A Reaper, another Reaper.

The Crowd.

Chorus of Kinsfolk, Chorus of Reapers, Chorus of Mourners.

SCENE

The Country of the Abruzzi, many years ago.

ACT I

A room on the ground floor of a rustic house. The great door opens upon a sunny threshing-floor; and a scarf of scarlet wool is stretched across the door to impede passers; the scarf is held at one end by a pitchfork and at the other by a distaff, and against one of the lintels hangs a cross of wax to protect the house from evil spirits. A closed door draped with myrtle is in the wall at the right; and against this wall stand three wooden chests. At the left, in the depth of the wall, is a chimney with a deep hood; and a little farther on a small door, and near this a loom.

There are various utensils and pieces of furniture about the room, such as chests of drawers, benches, shelves, reels, spindles, skeins of hemp and wool hanging upon a cord stretched between two nails; mortars, jars, bowls, salt-jars and flasks made from gourds emptied and dried. And there is an ancient kneading-trough, on which is

carved an image of Our Lady. There is a jug of water and a table. From the ceiling hangs by cords a long shelf laden with cheeses. Two barred windows five or six feet from the floor make light at the sides of the great door, and each has its sprig of red buckwheat to ward off evil spirits.

SCENE I

Splendore, Favetta, and Ornella, the three sisters, are kneeling in front of the three chests that contain the bridal outfit, choosing garments for the bride. Their fresh voices are like the morning songs of birds.

Splendore :

What wilt thou have, Vienda, dearest?

Favetta :

Our little sister, newest, nearest!

Splendore :

Wilt thou have a gown of woollen?
Or wilt thou have one soft and silken,
All with blossoms overspread,
Blossoms yellow and blossoms red?

Ornella, singing :

Only green I would be wearing,
To San Giovanni's feast a-faring.
Green, for by a sweet green way
One came to woo me on a day.
Well-a-way, ah, well-a-way!

Splendore :

Here is the bodice of broidery,
And the little silver stomacher;
Here is the twelve-gored skirt for her
And here, little sister, look and see
The necklace a hundred corals long,
That thy new mother gives to thee!

Ornella, singing :

Only of green the drapery
For the chamber on a wedding-day;
Well-a-way, ah, well-a-way!

Favetta :

What wilt thou have, Vienda, dearest?

Splendore :

Our little sister, newest, nearest!

Ornella :

Here are necklace and earrings for the
bride,

And a little red ribbon, gayly tied.
Now the bell goes ringing, ringing,
The great bell that rings at noon.

Splendore:

All the kinsfolk will come soon;
All the folk, they come a-bringing
Baskets of the ripe spring wheat,
And thou art not ready, sweet.

Ornella :

The silly sheep on the hillside
Feeding, does not know
How the wolf seeks through the valley
To find where filberts grow,
Fresh little filberts and pistachio.

What a bride for early waking!
Like the little mole she sleeps,
But he's up when dawn is breaking,
And out the dormouse peeps,
And even the badger who sleeps well.
O listen, listen to the bell!

*She sings her little song rapidly, then breaks
into a great laugh; and the others laugh
with her.*

The three sisters:

Aligi! Aligi! art thou here?

Splendore:

Wilt thou wear clothes of velvet, dear?

Favetta:

Would'st thou like to sleep for a century
With the sleeping beauty, thou and she?

Splendore:

Thy father in the fields is reaping,
Brother mine, since the day-star, peeping,
Was mirrored bright in the sickle's blade,
The sickle whose toil is never stayed.

Favetta:

And thy mother has put spice in the wine,
And in the water is anise, fine,
And cloves are thrust into the meat,
And the newmade cheese with thyme is
sweet.

Splendore:

And a yearling lamb they killed last
night,
His head was spotted black and white.
He is for the bridegroom and the bride.

Favetta:

And the left shoulder is set aside
For the old prophet, Ustorgio
Of La Fara, that he may
Foretell good luck on your wedding-
day.

Ornella:

To-morrow, to-morrow is San Giovanni,
Brother dear, it is San Giovanni!
Up to La Plaia I will run
To see poor San Giovanni's head
Lie within the rising sun.
To see, in a platter of bright gold,
How his blood is bubbling red.

Favetta:

Up, Vienda, golden head!
Wild periwinkles are thine eyes.
In the harvest-field, new fallen, lies
The wheat that is like thy golden hair.

Splendore:

Listen, listen, what says the mother?
"Once I had three olive-trees,
And now a blossoming-plum with these,
My three daughters, and yet another."

Ornella:

Pale plum-blossom, lazy one,
Why art thou waiting? Writing the sun
A little blue letter, that will pray
Him never, never set to-day?

She laughs and her sisters laugh with her.

SCENE 2

*From the little door enters their mother,
Candia della Leonessa.*

Candia:

Ah, little crickets, chatterers three,
One in a fury of merry song
Burst his sides in the poplar-tree.
Now the cocks will crow no more
To waken those who sleep too long.
There 'll be only cicalas singing soon,
Three cicalas at high noon.
A chamber they took with a fast-shut
door
For a leafy nook in the poplar's shade,
But the bride hears not a word that's
said.
Aligi! Aligi! O my son!

*The door opens and the bridegroom comes in,
gravely saluting.*

Aligi:

Praised be Maria and Gesù!
And you, O mother, who gave to me
This flesh baptized in the Trinity.
Mother, blessèd may you be!
Blessèd be ye, sisters three,
Flowers of this blood of mine,
Forgive, for me, the cross I sign
On the brow, that, there, the evil one
May never pass in life or death;
That flame touch not, nor fiery breath,
Nor taint of poison, nor any stain;
That tears bathe not, nor sweat of pain.
Holy Spirit, Father, Son!

*The sisters cross themselves and gathering
up the garments pass through the little
door. Aligi draws near to his mother
as if under a spell.*

Candia:

Flesh of my living flesh, I touch thy brow
With this bread that is made of finest
wheat,

Made in the trough that was a century
old

Before thy birth, yes, and before my
birth,

Rolled out upon the board a century old,
Moulded with these my hands that
tended thee.

I touch thy forehead that it may be pure,
I touch thy breast that it be without
pain;

I touch this shoulder, so, and this, that
they

May guide thy arms, arms that are
strong for toil,

And that thy love may lean her sweet
cheek here.

Oh, may Christ speak to thee, and
mayest thou hear!

*With the bread the mother makes the sign of
the cross over her son who falls on his
knees before her.*

Aligi:

I laid me down and slept, and dreamed
of Christ;

Christ spoke to me and said: "Be not
afraid."

And San Giovanni spoke: "Be sure,"
he said,

"Without the taper's light thou wilt not
lie;"

He said: "An evil death thou wilt not
die."

And you, O mother! have chosen for
me my fate,

O! mother you have chosen a bride for
me,

A bride for your son, in your house to be.
My mother, you have brought to me a
bride,

That with me on the pillow she may
sleep;

That she and I may eat from the one
dish.

I pasture flocks upon the mountain side;

O mother! I must go back to my
sheep!

*The mother touches his brow with her hand
as if to drive away an evil shadow.*

Candia:

Rise up, rise up, my son, strange words
are these!

Thy words change colour even while thou
dost speak,

As when the wind blows through the
olive-trees.

The son rises, dazed.

Aligi:

Where is my father that I see him not?

Candia:

Down in the wheat-field with the har-
vesters,

Binding the sheaves there in the grace
of God.

Aligi:

I reaped the grain once in his body's
shade.

I was so little that I had not made

My first communion. My head reached
his thigh.

The first time that I struck, I cut a
vein,

Here, where the scar is. With fresh
 leaves they stayed
 The flowing of the blood. My father
 said:
 "Aligi, son," he said, "Aligi, son,
 Give up the sickle, and take to thee the
 crook,
 And be a shepherd on the mountain-
 side."
 And all that he commanded has been
 done.

Candia:

My son, my son, what is it pains thee
 thus?
 Perhaps it is the burden of thy dream?
 Thy words are like the twilight when it
 falls,
 And one sits on the stone by the wayside,
 And follows not the road, because he
 knows
 He may not come where his heart doth
 abide,
 When twilight falls while yet one cannot
 hear
 The Ave Maria sounding far or near.

Aligi:

Back to the mountain I must be returning.

Mother, where have you put my shepherd's crook

Which knows by night and day the grassy paths?

I want it, when our kinsfolk come to-day,
That they may see how I have carved it all.

The mother brings the crook from a corner near the fireplace.

Candia:

Here it is, son; thy sisters, look and see,
For San Giovanni they have decked it out

With red clove-pinks and spicy garden herbs.

Aligi, showing the carving:

I have them in the red wood of my crook,
Always, and in my hand, my sisters three,
Who go with me along the grassy paths.
Here are three little maidens, mother,
look,

And here three angels flying over them,
 And here three trailing stars, and here
 three doves,
 And for each one I have made a little
 flower,
 And this is the sun, and this the crescent
 moon;
 This is the stole, and this the sacrament;
 And this, see, this is San Biagio's tower.
 This is the river, here, and this my house,
 But who is this that stands within the
 door?

Candia:

Aligi, Aligi, why wilt thou make me
 weep?

Aligi:

And there, low down, near to the iron
 foot,
 There is the shepherd, and there are the
 sheep;
 Shepherd and sheep and mountain all are
 there.
 I must go to the mountain and the sheep,
 Even though you weep, my mother, even
 though I weep.

*He leans both hands on the crook and bows
his head absorbed in thought.*

Candia:

And Hope, Aligi, where hast thou put
her?

Aligi:

Her face I never yet could learn to know,
That I might carve it, mother, verily.

A wild clamor is heard far off.

O mother, who is this that shrieks so
loud?

Candia:

It is the tumult of the harvesters;
God save them from the madness of the
sun;
And may the Baptist keep their hands
from blood!

Aligi:

Mother, whoever put that red scarf
there,
Stretched out across the doorway of our
house,
And leaned the distaff and the pitchfork
there?

If evil things are not to enter there,
 Ah, pile the plough and cart and oxen
 there,
 Against the sill, and heap up stones and
 sods,
 And all the lime of all the furnaces,
 And the rock with Samson's footprint
 pile above,
 And heap Maiella there with all its
 snows.

Candia:

My son, what is it stirring in thy heart?
 Christ said to thee that thou shouldst
 have no fear.
 Art thou awake? Look at the cross of
 wax,
 For it was blessed on last Ascension Day;
 And holy water was sprinkled on the
 hinge.
 There is no evil thing can enter there.
 It was thy sisters stretched the scarf
 across.
 It is the prize that thou thyself didst
 win,

Before thou hadst turned shepherd, O
 my son,
 Didst win it, victor in the ploughing
 match.
 Dost thou remember? They have placed
 it there
 That it may stop our kinsfolk as they
 pass,
 That, passing, each may give a pleasant
 gift.
 Why dost thou ask? Thou knowest
 the custom well.

Aligi:

O mother, I have slept seven hundred
 years,
 Seven hundred years; and I am come
 from far..
 My cradle, mother, I remember not.

Candia:

What is the matter, son? Are thy
 words mad?
 Has thy bride poured for thee, perchance,
 black wine,
 And thou, from fasting, art frenzied by
 the wine,

So that thy feeling overbears thy
thought?

O Mary, Virgin, give, oh, give me peace!

Voice of Ornella, singing:

Only the green I would be wearing,
To San Giovanni's feast a-faring;
Green, for by a sweet green way
One came to win me on a day, —
Well-a-way, ah, well-a-way!

SCENE 3

The bride enters, accompanied by the sisters of Aligi and is welcomed by his mother with various household ceremonies. An evil omen follows: Vienda and Aligi are solemnly seated before the door of the bridal chamber, when Vienda, rising suddenly, lets the split loaf of bread, which Candia has given her, fall to the floor. All are filled with dismay. Ornella calls upon San Sisto to drive all evil from their home.

¹ Miss Jewett was at work upon this translation during the last summer of her life, but did not complete it. The editors have briefly indicated the plot of the longer portions omitted: Act I, Scenes 3, 4, and 5, and Act III.

SCENE 4

The kinswomen come in, bearing on their heads baskets of grain trimmed with ribbons. Upon the grain in each basket lies a loaf of bread and in each loaf a flower is thrust. The women enter one by one with rural ceremonies, calling down blessings upon the bride at whose feet they place the baskets. They scatter a little grain upon the heads of bride and bridegroom. A bell is ringing. Without are heard the voices of reapers; they seem to increase in number and to draw nearer. Suddenly a woman's cry is heard: "Help for Christ's sake. People of God, people of God, save me!"

SCENE 5

The woman rushes in, breathless from haste and fright. She is covered with dust and thorns, like a hunted animal. She cowers in the chimney corner, calling upon the good people to save her; to shut and bolt the door: the reapers, crazed by sun and by wine, are after her like mad dogs. The

other women crowd together on the opposite side of the room. Suddenly Ornella runs and shuts and bolts the door. She approaches the frightened stranger, speaking gently, and brings her a bowl of wine and water. The uproar without grows louder and nearer; the reapers call brutally and beat upon the door. One of them looks through the window bars and spies the stranger; at this the mob grows wilder. They call out to Candia that the girl she is hiding is Mila di Codra, the daughter of the magician, Jorio. They use threats and evil words at which the sisters stop their ears. The kinsfolk clamor, urging Aligi to drive the stranger forth; his mother commands him to do so. He approaches Mila and draws aside the veil which has covered her head. He stares at her as if bewitched, forgetting to drop the end of the veil. Then he starts to drive her out. Mila begs for protection and warns him that the hearth is sacred, where she has taken refuge. Aligi, blind with rage and fear at the violation of his hearth, raises his crook to strike her. His sisters try to protect her, weeping. Suddenly Aligi falls on his knees, crying

out that he sees the mute angel weeping like his sisters. It is he who has sinned against the hearth. He begs his sisters to pray for him and to care for Mila, and he takes the flowers of San Giovanni from his crook and lays them at her feet. He tries to burn the offending hand with a coal from the fire. The threats of the reapers are renewed with more and more violence. The women kneel and begin the Litany. Aligi places the wax crucifix upon the threshold and opens the door: "Good Christians, this cross was blessed upon Ascension Day. I have placed it on the threshold that you may guard yourselves from sinning against the poor girl who has taken refuge on this hearth. Reapers of Norca, may Heaven help you." The reapers uncover, reach out their hands to touch the cross, put their hands to their lips and silently withdraw. The Litany continues. Lazaro di Roio comes in, wounded, his head bound up. Mila veils herself again and creeps to the door, waiting a chance to escape.

ACT II

A mountain cavern partly furnished with boards, brushwood, and straw, with a wide opening toward a stony path. Through the cave's great mouth are seen green pastures, snowy peaks, wandering clouds. There are couches of sheepskins, tables of rough wood, wallets and wine skins, full and empty. There is a turner's lathe for turning and carving, with hatchet, plane, knife, file and other instruments, and near by finished objects: distaffs, spindles, ladles, spoons, mortars and pestles, shepherds' pipes, whistles, candlesticks. There is a block of walnut wood that at bottom still appears formless, incased in its bark, but above shows the figure of an angel roughly hewn out with the chisel, down to the waist, and with the wings almost finished. An olive-oil lamp is burning before the image of Our Lady in a hollow of the rock as in a niche. A shepherd's pipe hangs near. Sheep bells are heard in the silence of the mountain. It is late afternoon of a day in early autumn.

SCENE I

Malde, the treasure-seeker, and Anna Onna, the old herb-woman, stretched out in their rags, are asleep on the sheepskins. Cosma, the saint, dressed in a coat of skin, sleeps also, but seated, with his chin resting on his clasped knees. Aligi is sitting on a bench, engaged in carving with his tools the block of walnut wood. Mila di Codra sits opposite him, looking at him.

Mila:

Oh, he was mute, the Saint
Carved of the walnut tree;
Deaf was the holy wood,
Sant' Onofrio naught said he.

But then the maiden spoke
(*Miserere Domine*).

But then the beauty spoke:
"Here is my heart," said she.

"If he will have blood for his cure,
Take my heart's blood of me;
But cover the secret sure,
Let him never, never see."

And, sudden, a shoot is seen
Between the wooden lips,
Then Sant' Onofrio grows green
At all his finger tips.

She stoops to pick up shavings and splinters.

Aligi:

Mila, this, too, is wood of the walnut
tree.

Will it grow green, Mila, grow green
again?

Mila, bending down to the ground:

“If he will have blood for his cure,
Take my heart's blood of me” —

Aligi:

Will it grow green, Mila, grow green
again?

Mila:

“But cover the secret sure,
Let him never, never see!”

Aligi:

O Mila, let the miracle absolve us!
Let the mute angel here protect us still,

For, carving him, I do not use my
tools,
I work but with my soul held in my
hand.
What art thou seeking there? What
hast thou lost?

Mila:

I gather up the splinters and will burn
them,
And with each one a little grain of
incense.
Aligi, hasten, hasten, for time passes,
Half-full already is the September moon.
The shepherds already they begin to
leave,
Those who go Puglia way, and those for
Rome.
And whither will my love, my shepherd,
go?
Where he may take his way let there be
meadows
And springs of water, and never any
wind,
And let him think of me when it grows
night!

Aligi:

Mila, Aligi toward Rome will travel.
 He will go where they go by all the roads,
 Leading his flock toward Rome, toward
 Rome the Great,
 That he may get him pardon from the
 Vicar,
 Forgiveness from the Vicar of Christ
 Our Lord,
 Because he is the Shepherd of the
 shepherds.
 Not to Apulia this year will he journey,
 But to Our Lady of the Schiavonia
 Send by the hand of Alai of Averna
 These candlesticks carved out of cypress
 wood,
 And with them he will send two little
 candles,
 That she may not forget him, though a
 sinner,
 Our Lady who keeps watch upon the
 shore.
 And the Angel, Mila, when it shall be
 finished,
 This Angel he will load upon a mule,
 And with him, step by step, will carry it.

Mila:

O hasten, hasten, Aligi, for time passes,
From the girdle down the Angel still is
hidden

In the block, and still its two feet are
fast bound

In the wood, and still its hands are with-
out fingers,

And the eyes are on the same line with
the forehead.

Thou didst linger long making the
Angel's wings

Feather by feather, but it cannot fly.

Aligi:

Gostanzo the painter, he will aid me,
Mila.

Gostanzo of Bisegna, he who paints
The histories that make our carts so gay.
Already he and I have planned together
How he will give me of his finest colors;
And the brothers, it may be, at the Badia,
For a little lamb will give a bit of gold
leaf

To put upon the wings and round the
throat.

Mila:

O hasten, hasten, Aligi, for time passes,
 Already the night is longer than the day,
 And from the plain the shadow rises
 early,
 Early and swiftly when one is not think-
 ing,
 So that the eye directs the hand no
 longer,
 And the blind chisel cannot aid thy skill.

*Cosma stirs in his sleep and moans. Far
 off is heard the holy chant of the
 pilgrimage.*

Cosma is dreaming, and who knows what
 he dreams?
 Listen, the song of the company of pil-
 grims,
 Who are crossing over the mountain to
 go down,
 Perhaps, to Santa Maria della Potenza,
 Aligi, toward thy land, thy land they go;
 Toward thine own house there where
 thy mother dwells;
 Perhaps they will pass by at little dis-
 tance,

And the mother will hear them singing,
 and Ornella,
 Perhaps, and they will say: "Listen,
 these pilgrims
 Are coming down from the cabins of the
 shepherds,
 And never a message has been sent to
 us!"

*Aligi is bending down shaping roughly with
 the hatchet the lower part of the block.
 He gives one blow and, leaving the iron
 in the wood, rises anxiously.*

Aligi:

Why wilt thou touch the heart where
 most it hurts?
 I will run down and meet them in the
 roadway,
 Mila, and beg the crucifer to carry
 A message — büt, oh, what, what shall
 I say?

Mila:

Say to him: "O good crucifer, I pray thee,
 If thou pass through the valley of San
 Biagio,

Through the countryside that they call
Acquanova,

Ask for a house, the house there of a
woman

Who is called Candia della Leonessa.

Halt there, for thou wilt surely have from
her

A bit of food and drink, and it may be
Thou wilt have more. Halt there, and
say: 'Thy son

Aligi salutes thee, and salutes his sisters
With thee, salutes also his bride, Vienda,
And sends his promise that he will
descend,

That he may have thy blessing once
again

In peace, before he needs must go away;
And he assures thee that he now is free
From evil and from peril; he is free,
Forever free, from the false enemy;
And never again will he be cause of
anger,

And never again be cause of grief and
tears

To his mother, to his bride, nor to his
sisters.' "

Aligi:

O Mila, Mila, what is the wind that
beats

Upon thy soul and sways thee? A sud-
den wind,

A wind of fear. And thy voice is grown
faint

Upon thy lips, and all the blood has left
Thy face. Mila, why wouldst thou have
me send

A lying message to my mother's house?

Mila:

In truth, in truth, in very truth I speak,
O brother, brother mine, dear to thy
sister,

As true as that I never sinned with thee,
But I was as a taper burning ever
Before thy faith, and shining with the
light

Of love immaculate, adoring thee.

In truth, in truth, in very truth I speak,
And say: Go, go, run down into the
road,

And seek the crucifer, that he may bear
The message of thy peace to Acquanova.

The parting hour has come, the hour has
come

For Jorio's daughter, and so let it be.

Aligi:

Surely of the wild honey thou hast eaten,
And all thy mind is vexed. Where wilt
thou go?

Mila:

I will go where they go by all the roads.

Aligi:

Ah, come with me then, Mila, come with
me!

The way is long, is long, but thee also
I will mount on my mule, and we will go,
We two, with hope, and travel toward
great Rome.

Mila:

No, no, I must needs go another way,
Swiftly, on my own feet, and without hope.

Aligi turns to the old woman, who sleeps.

Aligi:

Ho, Anna Onna, there! Wake up! Get
up!

And go and seek for me black hellebore,
That it may bring this woman's wits
again.

Mila:

Do not be angry, Aligi, for if thou art,
Even thou, angry with me, how shall I
live
Until the night? From underneath thy
heel,
Aligi, I shall not gather up my heart.

Aligi:

To my own house I never will return,
Daughter of Jorio, except with thee,
Mila di Codra, mine by sacrament.

Mila:

Aligi, Aligi, shall I again pass over
That threshold where the cross of wax
was laid?
There where a man appeared with bleed-
ing head;
And the man's son spoke there and said
to him:
"If that blood is unjust, thou mayst not
pass."

And it was noon, the vigil of the day
Of San Giovanni. It was harvest time.
The sickle now hangs idle on the wall,
The grain lies resting in the granary,
But the pain sown that day is growing
still.

Cosma stirs, groaning in his sleep.

Aligi:

But dost thou know who will lead thee
by the hand?

Cosma, shrieking:

No, do not loose him! do not let him go!

SCENE 2

*The saint opens his arms, lifting his face
from his hands.*

Mila:

What art thou dreaming, Cosma? Cosma,
speak!

Cosma wakens, and rises.

Aligi:

What hast thou seen, O Cosma? Cosma,
speak!

Cosma:

Horrible things came to me in my sleep.
I saw — I dare not tell what I have seen.
Oh, every dream that comes from God
must be

Made pure with fire, before it can be
told.

I saw, I saw, and, surely, I will tell —
But let me not profanely use the name
Of God, my God, interpreting the dream,
Now, while the darkness still is over me.

Aligi:

Cosma, thou art a saint, for many years
Thou hast bathed thyself with water
from the snow,

With water flowing from the mountain-
side

Thou hast quenched thy thirst under
the open sky.

To-day thou hast been sleeping in my
cave,

Upon my sheepfells that have been made
clean

With sulphur that can keep the night-
mare off.

Thou hast seen visions, Cosma, in thy
 sleep,
 The eye of the Lord God is upon thee.
 Then with thy understanding succor me.
 Now I will speak to thee; do thou reply.

Cosma:

O boy, true wisdom I have never learned,
 And I have no more understanding mind
 Than has the pebble in the shepherd path.

Aligi:

O Cosma, man of God, listen to me.
 I pray thee by the Angel hidden there
 In the block, that has no ears and yet
 does hear.

Cosma:

Speak out then, shepherd, speak straight
 words,
 And do not put thy faith in me,
 But in the holy truth have faith.

*Malde and Anna Onna rise up and rest on
 their elbows to listen.*

Aligi:

O Cosma, Cosma, this is holy truth:

From the plain of Puglia I came back to
the mountain,
Leading my flock, the day of Corpus
Christi.

When I had found a spot to make my
sheepfold,

Down to my house I went to spend three
days.

And in my house, Cosma, I found my
mother

Who said to me: "My dear son, I will
give thee

A bride." And I made answer: "Mother,
always

I have kept thy commandments," and
she said,

"'Tis well, my son, this is thy bride."
They made

The wedding feast, and all the kinsfolk
came

With me, to bring the new bride to our
house.

And I was like a man on the farther
shore

Of a stream, who sees the things that lie
beyond

The water, while through the midst he
sees

The water flow, that flows eternally.

Cosma, 't was Sunday, and I had not
drunk

Of wine made heavy with the poppy
seeds.

Cosma, why did a great sleep fall on me,
And overpower my forgetful heart?

Cosma, I think I slept seven hundred
years.

On Monday it was late when we arose.
My mother broke the loaf of bread
above

The maiden's head, who only wept and
wept.

And I had never touched her. Then our
kin

Came bringing baskets filled with wheat
for us.

But I was silent, always, and most sad,
As if I stood within the shadow of death.

And, see, upon a sudden enter there
This woman trembling all from head to
foot.

The reapers they were persecuting her,

The dogs! And she was praying us for
help.

And none of us, Cosma, not one would
stir,

Only my little sister, the smallest one,
Ran, and was brave enough to close the
door.

And then the door is battered by those
dogs,

Cosma, with every sort of vile abuse.

And they cry out against this woman
here,

With lying mouths and hateful words.

And the kinsfolk wish to throw her to
the pack.

And she, all sorrowful, close by the
hearth,

Begs mercy that they may not slaughter
her.

Then I, myself, I seize and drag her
there,

In hate and fear; and 't is as if I dragged
My own heart when I was a little child.

And she cries out, and I, — O, I lift up
My staff against her. And my sisters
weep.

And then, behind her, Cosma, with these
eyes,

I see, I see the Angel stand, that weeps.
O Saint, I see. it! The Angel looks
on me,

It weeps, and does not speak. And then
I kneel.

I beg for pardon. And to punish this
My hand, I reach and take from off the
hearth

A burning coal. "No, do not burn thy-
self!"

The woman cries. And then she speaks
to me.

O Cosma, O thou saint, with water of
snow

Thou dost baptize thyself dawn after
dawn;

And thou, old woman, canst tell all the
herbs

That heal all evils known to Christian
flesh,

The virtues thou dost know of every root;
And thou, Malde, with that forked wand
of thine

Discernest where the buried treasures lie

At the feet of the dead, who have been
long time dead —

For a hundred years, for a thousand
years, I know,

And deep they are buried in the moun-
tain, deep —

And now I will ask of you, of you who
hear

The things that come from far, and far
away,

What voice was it, and from what dis-
tances,

That came and spoke so that Aligi heard?

Answer me, all of you. She said to me:

“How wilt thou tend thy flock if thou
thyself,

Shepherd Aligi, hurtest thine own hand?”

And with that word she seemed to gather
up

The very soul of me from out my bones,

As thou, old woman, gatherest an herb!

Mila weeps silently.

Anna Onna:

There is a red herb that they call
glaspi,

And another, white, and it is called
 egusa,
 And the one grows and the other, far
 apart,
 But the roots beneath the ground they
 find each other,
 Under the blind earth, and they inter-
 twine
 So closely that not even Santa Lucia
 Discerns them. And their leaves are
 different,
 But they bear the same flower, each
 seven years.
 And this also is written in the books,
 And Cosma knows the power of the Lord.

Aligi:

O listen, Cosma, that forgetful sleep,
 From whence, from whom was it sent
 to my bed?
 A maiden's innocent hand it was that
 closed
 The door of safety; and to me appeared
 The Angel of good counsel; and one
 word
 Upon the lip made an eternal bond.

Which woman was my wife there by the
 sign
 Of the good grain, of the bread and of
 the flower?

Cosma:

Shepherd Aligi, listen, the just scales
 And the just weight and balance are of
 God.
 And do thou still take heed to understand
 The mind of Him in whom thy safety
 lies;
 Take thou from Him a pledge for the
 unknown one.
 But she thou didst not touch, where is
 she now?

Aligi:

I left for the sheep-fold at vesper-time,
 That vigil of San Giovanni. At the
 dawn
 I found myself above at Capracinta,
 And stood, and waited for the rising
 sun.
 And in the sun's red ring I saw the face
 Of the Beheaded. Then I sought my
 fold,

Took up again my pasturing and my
pain.

And it seemed always that my sleep
endured,

And that my flock was feeding on my
life.

And, oh, my heart, how heavily it
weighed!

O Cosma, I saw her, saw her shadow
first,

And then herself upon the threshold
stone.

It was the day of Santo Teobaldo.

This woman was sitting there upon the
stone,

At the threshold and she could not rise,
because

Her feet were wounded. Then she said:
"Aligi,

Thou knowest me?" And I answered:
"Thou art Mila."

And then we spoke no more, because no
more

Were we two souls. We did not sin that
day,

Nor ever after. I tell thee in very truth.

Cosma:

Shepherd Aligi, truly thou hast lighted
A holy lamp in the darkness of thy night,
But thou hast set it in place of the old
mark,

The ancient boundary that thy fathers
raised.

Thou hast removed that consecrated
stone.

And what shall come to thee if thy lamp
fail?

The counsel of man's heart is like deep
water;

And yet the honest man may understand.

Aligi:

I pray to God that he will place on us
The seal of that eternal sacrament.

Dost thou see what I do? With soul in
hand

I carve this block of wood into the form
Of the Angel who appeared. It was
begun

On last Assumption Day, and I intend
At the Rosario to finish it.

Then, listen, I will lead my flock to Rome,

And carry this angel with me on a mule,
And I will go myself to the Holy Father,
In the name of San Pietro Celestino
Who did long penance on the mountain-side.

I am going to the Shepherd of the shepherds

And with this offering ask that he may grant

That the bride whom I did never touch may go

Back to her mother, loosed from every bond,

And that I may take unto myself this woman,

The stranger who can weep and make no sound.

And now I ask of thy great knowledge, tell,

O Cosma, will that grace be granted me?

Cosma:

Now all the pathways of a man seem straight

To the man; but it is God who weigheth hearts.

High walls, high walls are built around
the City,

It has great gates of iron, and all about
Great tombs are builded where grass
grows and grows.

Thy little lamb will browse not on that
grass,

Shepherd Aliḡi. Inquire of thy mother.

A voice outside, shrieking:

O Cosma, Cosma, art thou there? Come
forth!

* * * * *

SCENE 3

* * * * *

Aliḡi:

I follow, for I did not tell thee all.—

Mila:

Aliḡi, true thou didst not tell the whole!
Go to the road and seek the crucifer
And pray that he will take thy message
home.

*The saint goes away across the pastures.
Now and then is heard the singing of
the pilgrims.*

Aligi, Aligi, all we did not tell!
And in my mouth 't were better I should
have

A good handful of dust, yes, or a stone
To shut it fast. But listen just to this,
Aligi, I have never done thee harm,
And harm I will not do thee. Now my
feet

Are healed again, and well I know the
road.

The parting hour is come for Jorio's
daughter.

The parting hour is come. So let it be.

Aligi:

I know not, thou knowest not the hour
that comes.

Fill up our lamp with oil. There still is
oil

In the skin. And wait while I go to the
pilgrims,

For now I know right well what I will
say.

*He turns to go. The woman, overcome by
dismay, calls him back.*

Mila:

My brother, Aligi, give thy hand to me.

Aligi:

Mila, the road is there, not far away.

Mila:

Give me thy hand that I may kiss it,
dear.

It is the one spring granted to my
thirst.

Aligi, drawing near:

Mila, this is the hand I would have
burned.

This is the wicked hand that did thee
wrong.

Mila:

I have forgotten. I am but that creature
Whom thou didst find seated upon the
stone —

And who knows by what pathways
she had come!

Aligi:

Upon thy face the tear is not yet dried,
In thy lashes, trembling, still a tear
doth linger
While thou dost speak, and yet it does
not fall.

Mila:

Aligi, listen! there has fallen a great
silence.
They are not singing now. With the
grass and snow
We are alone, brother, we are alone.

Aligi:

Mila, thou art now as on that first even-
ing
There, sitting on the stone, when thou
wouldest smile
With thine eyes and all the time thy
feet were bleeding.

Mila:

And thou, art thou not he who knelt
that day,
Who laid the flowers of San Giovan
Battista

Upon the ground? And one he gathers up
And carries it hid in his shepherd's scrip.

Aligi:

Mila, there is a cadence in thy voice
That comforts me, and yet that makes
me sad,
As in October when one leads one's
flocks,
And walks and walks along beside the
sea.

Mila:

To walk with thee on the mountains and
the shore,
I would to God that this might be my
fate.

Aligi:

O my beloved! gird thee for the journey.
Long is the way, but love, but love is
strong.

Mila:

Would I might walk with thee on burn-
ing fire,
Aligi, and the journey never end!

Aligi:

Upon the mountains thou shalt gather
gentians,
And little starfish down upon the sands.

Mila:

Aligi, I would crawl and plant my knees
In thy footsteps, if I might follow thee.

Aligi:

Think of the hours of rest when night
shall fall!
For pillow thou shalt have the mint and
thyme.

Mila:

I do not think, no. And yet let me stay
This one night more and live here where
thou breathest,
And listen to thy sleep yet one night
more,
And let me watch thee even as thy dogs
watch.

Aligi:

Thou knowest, thou knowest, Mila, the
thing that comes!

With thee I share water, and bread, and
 salt,
 And thus with thee I will share bed and
 board
 Even to death. Mila, give me thy hands!

Mila:

Ah, how one trembles, trembles, thou
 art cold.
 Aligi, thou art white — Where is it
 gone —
 The blood that leaves thy face to the
 last drop? .

Aligi:

Oh, Mila, Mila, I hear sound like
 thunder —
 And all the mountain falls and crashes
 down.
 Where art thou, Mila? Everything
 grows dark!

*He stretches out his hand to her as one who
 staggers. They kiss, then they fall upon
 their knees facing each other.*

Mila:

Have pity upon us, O Holy Virgin!

Aligi:

Have pity upon us, O Jesus Christ!

There is a great silence.

A harsh voice is heard outside.

Voice:

Shepherd, they seek you at the fold,
A black sheep there has fallen lame.

Aligi rises, wavering, and goes in the direction of the voice.

The keeper seeks for you, and bids you
run,
And says there is a woman with a basket,
They don't know who she is, asking for
you.

Aligi turns his head to look back at the woman who is still kneeling; and his look embraces everything in the place.

Aligi, in a low voice:

Into the lamp there, Mila, pour more oil,
Lest it go out. For see, it scarcely burns.
Take the oil from the skin, there still is
more,

And wait for me, I will be back by night.
 And do not be afraid. God pardon us;
 Because we tremble, Mary pardons us.
 Fill up the lamp, and pray to her for
 grace.

He goes off across the pasture.

Mila:

O Virgin, holy Virgin, grant this grace,
 That I may stay with face upon the
 ground,
 Grown cold here, that I may be found
 here, dead,
 By those who come, at last, to bury me.
 There was no sin, beneath thy holy eyes,
 It was not sin: 't was thou didst grant
 it us.

We sinned not with our lips (thou art
 thyself
 Our witness). With our lips we never
 sinned.

I dare to die beneath thy holy eyes,
 Mary. I have no power to go away,
 But live with him, — that, Mila will
 not do.

I was not wicked, Mother of gentleness;

I was a trampled pool, too much, too
much,

Have I been shamed under the eyes of
Heaven.

And who shall take from out my memory,
Mother, that shame of mine, save it be
thou?

Mother, I was reborn when love was
born,

And thou didst will it, faithful Virgin,
thou.

And all this other blood that fills my
veins,

It comes from far away, from far away,
Comes from the depths of earth, from
where she sleeps

Who suckled me; (O let her see me now!)
From far it comes, comes from my inno-
cence

Of far-off childhood; Mary, thou canst
see.

Not with our lips (thou art our witness,
Mother),

We sinned not with our lips, — not with
our lips.

And if I tremble, 't is because I bring

The trembling in my bones from out the
past.

Here with my fingers now I close my
eyes.

*With the first and middle fingers of both
hands she presses down her eyelids;
and bends her face down to the ground.*

I feel death near me, feel death very near.
The trembling grows. My heart will
not be still.

She rises impetuously.

Oh, wretched me! what I was told to do
I have not done. Three times he said
to me

“Fill up the lamp,” and, see, ’t is going
out.

*She runs to the oil-skin that hangs from a
beam, but she watches the little trembling
flame and strives to sustain it by her
murmured prayer.*

*Ave Maria! gratia plena, Dominus
tecum —*

*She seizes the skin, pressing it in her hands,
seeks for the flask into which to pour
the oil, but from the shrunken skin she
can squeeze out only a few drops.*

'Tis empty, empty! Three drops,
blessèd Virgin!

They shall be holy for my extreme
unction,

Two for my hands, the other for my
mouth,

And all the three upon my soul!

But, if I live still when he comes again,

What shall I say to him? What shall
I say?

Before he sees me, he will surely see

The lamp gone out. Oh, Mother, if even
love

Might not avail to keep the lamp alight,

What help to him shall be this love of
mine?

*She presses the skin yet again, searches
about in a hamper, turning the jugs
upside down, all the time murmuring
a prayer.*

O make it burn, *Madre intemerata!*
 Still for a little, still, while we might say
 An *Ave Maria!* while a prayer might last.
Salve Regina! Madre di Misericordia!

*In her breathless search she approaches the
 threshold, she hears a step and perceives
 a shadow. She cries out:*

O woman, O good woman, Christian soul,
 Stay, stay, and may God bless thee!
 Woman, stay!

For it may be that God has sent thee
 here.

What hast thou in thy basket? Hast
 thou oil?

Give me a little oil for charity.

Then enter here and thou may'st have
 thy choice

Of spoons and mortars, spindles, dis-
 taffs, all!

I must have oil to fill Our Lady's lamp,
 Lest it go out. For, if the lamp go out,
 I shall not find the road to Paradise.

Good Christian, dost thou hear me,
 wilt thou give

This gift to me for charity, for love?

The woman appears upon the threshold, her face covered with a black mantle; she takes the wooden measure from her head and without a word sets it on the ground. She removes the cloth, seeks within, takes a flask full of oil and holds it out to Mila di Codra.

Oh, blessèd, blessèd one! God will
 repay
 This deed of thine in heaven and on
 the earth!
 Thou hast it, hast it! Thou art clothed
 in black,
 Ah, but Our Lady surely will grant to
 thee
 To see again the dear face of thy
 dead,
 Because of this that thou hast done for
 me.

She takes the flask and turns anxiously to run to the dying lamp.

Oh, I am lost! I am lost! It is gone
 out!

The flask slips from her hands and is shattered on the earth. She stands motionless for some minutes, spell-bound by the horror of the omen. The veiled woman bends down with a single silent motion to the spilled oil, touches it with the fingers of her right hand and crosses herself.

SCENE 4

Mila looks at the woman with quiet sadness, and her desperate resignation makes her voice dull and slow.

Mila:

Pardon me, wanderer of Christ.

Thy charity avails me not.

The oil is spilled, the flask is shattered.

An evil fate is fallen on me.

Tell me what thou wilt have. These
things

The shepherd carved with his own hand.

Distaff and spindle, all are new.

Mortar and pestle would'st thou like?

Tell me, for nothing can I tell.

Now am I in the depths of hell.

The Veiled One, with trembling voice:

Daughter of Jorio, I came for thee,
It was for thee I brought these gifts,
That I might ask one grace of thee.

Mila:

Ah, voice of heaven, heard in my soul!
Heard always in my heart of hearts!

The Veiled One:

For thee I came from Acquanova.

Mila:

Ornella! Ornella, it is thou!

Ornella uncovers her face.

Ornella:

I am the sister of Aligi,
I am the daughter of Lazaro.

Mila:

In humbleness I kiss the feet
That brought thee to me so I might
In this hour see thy face again,
The hour of mortal agony.
'T was thou who showed me pity, first,
Ornella, and, now, thou art the last.

Ornella:

If I was first to pity thee,
For that I have done great penance since,
Mila di Codra. I speak truth,
My penance is not ended yet.

Mila:

Thy sweet voice trembles while thou
speak'st.
The knife that trembles in the wound
Makes far more pain, — so much more
pain!
Ah, little girl, thou dost not know.

Ornella:

Oh, did'st thou know the grief I have!
Know all the ill thou hast returned
For the little good I did to thee!
The house I left is desolate,
There is only dying there and tears.

Mila:

Why art thou wearing only black?
Oh, who is dead? Thou dost not speak,
Perhaps, perhaps, — it is the bride?

Ornella:

Ah, thou would'st gladly have her dead!

Mila:

God sees my heart. No, I have feared,
I have had terrors here within.
But tell me, who then? Answer me,
For God's sake, and for sake of thine
own soul!

Ornella:

No one of us has died as yet,
But all of us wear clothes of black
For that dear one who went away
And brought down ruin on his head.
But, ah! if thou could'st look on her,
If thou could'st see my mother now,
How would'st thou tremble! Upon us
Has come black summer, there has come
A bitter, poisoned autumn; sorrier
The saddest leap-year could not be.
Oh, when I shut the door, to save
Thy life, I brought black ruin down
On my own head. Thou did'st not seem
Unpitying then, thou who did'st pray
To us for pity!
And thou did'st ask of me my name,
That thou might'st speak of it in praise!
And on my name they call down shame,

Morning and evening in my house;
 And I am cursed and driven out,
 And stay apart, for every one
 Shrieks: "Look at her! she is the one
 Who slipped the bolt in the great door,
 So that vile creature might remain
 Huddled there in the chimney, safe."
 And I can bear no more, and say
 "'T were better to draw out your
 knives
 And tear me into bits." And this,
 Mila di Codra, is thy gratitude.

Mila:

'T is right, oh, it is right that thou
 Should'st strike me, it is right that thou
 Should'st pour this bitterness on me,
 Follow my sin with punishment
 Like this into the world below.
 Perhaps for me the stone and hedge,
 The straw and the insensate wool
 Will speak; and the mute Angel, living
 To thy brother's hand there in the
 block,
 And the Virgin, with her light gone out,
 Will speak; and I, I will not speak.

Ornella:

O Mila, now it seems to me as if
Thy soul were but a garment thou dost
wear,

And I could touch it, reaching out to
thee

My hand of faith.

How is it thou dost cast

Such evil on God's people?

Did'st thou see
Our poor Vienda thou would'st fall a-
trembling.

Her parched skin scarcely covers her
dry bones,

And her poor gums look whiter in her
mouth

Than her white teeth. And when the
first rain fell

On Saturday, our mother said to us,
Weeping: "See, daughters, see, now she
will go;

When the cold comes she will droop
down and die."

Ah, but my father does not weep! His
bitterness

He chews upon, and does not even move.

That dreadful wound of his is grown
infected,

And erysipelas laid hold on him.

(May San Cesidio and San Rocco help
us!)

And with the inflammation in his mouth,
He shrieks and cries aloud by day and
night.

His head is as if burned by a black fire.
And all the time he speaks such blas-
phemies

Enough to set the house a-quivering.

And we are terrified. How thy teeth
chatter!

Hast thou the fever? What has come
upon thee?

Mila:

So, always, at the sinking of the sun
The chill takes hold upon me, because I
Have not been used to night among the
mountains.

This is the hour when fires are lighted
up.

But speak on, speak to me now without
pity.

Ornella:

From some hint, yesterday, I knew
That he was brooding in his thought
To mount here to the fold. Last
evening

I did not see that he came home,
And all my blood stopped in my veins.
And then I made this hamper ready,
And my three sisters aided me,
For we are three born of one mother,
And all the three are marked for grief.
To-night I came from Acquanova,
I passed the ford across the river
And to the mountain took my way
Oh, woman! Christian woman,
I cannot bear to see thy pain!
Tell me, what can I do for thee?
Now thou art trembling even more
Than when thou wert beside the hearth
And all the reapers clamored.

Mila:

And did'st thou meet him? Art thou sure
That he has come? and is he at the
fold?
Art thou sure? art thou sure, Ornella?

Ornella:

I have not seen him since, nor know
Surely that he came up here to the
mountain.

At Gionco he had business, as I know;
Perhaps he will not come. Don't be afraid,
But, oh, do listen to me. For the sake
Of thine own soul's salvation, Mila, Mila,
Be penitent and take away from us
This evil spell. O give us back Aligi,
And may God pity thee, and go with thee!

Mila:

I am content, Aligi's sister,
Always content to do thy bidding.
'T is just that thou should'st strike me
down,

Me, woman of ill-life, magician's
Daughter, me, shameless sorceress!
Who but for charity did beg
The Christian traveller to give
A little oil, only a drop of oil
To keep the holy lamp alight.
Perhaps behind me yet again
The Angel weeps. Perhaps the stones
Will speak for me again. But I,

I will not speak. By the name only
 Of sister I say this to thee:
 (And if I do not speak the truth
 May my dear mother from her tomb
 Arise and seize me by the hair
 And strike me down into black earth
 speaking out
 Against her lying daughter.) Only this
 I say to thee: No sin have I
 Sinned ever with thy brother. Nay,
 I swear to thee that I am innocent.

Ornella:

Almighty God! Thou hast wrought a
 miracle!

Mila:

This is the love of Mila. Child,
 This is my love.

I say no more.

I am content to do thy will,
 And Jorio's daughter knows her way;
 Her spirit ere this was departing,
 Ere thou did'st come to call it, innocent!
 And do not fear more, sister of Aligi,
 Thou hast no need to fear.

* * * * * * *

SCENE 6

Mila di Codra lets fall the sack torn from the old woman, and looks at the man who has come, standing tall against the light. But recognizing him she gives a cry and takes refuge in the shadow at the back. Then Lazaro di Roio enters, in silence, carrying a cord twisted about his arm, like a herdsman who has set his bull free. One can hear on the stone the hurrying staff of Anna Onna, who escapes.

Lazaro di Roio:

Now, woman, do not be afraid,
 Though Lazaro di Roio comes
 He brings no sickle in his hand.
 He seeks not a revenge on thee.
 More than one drop of blood was drawn
 On the field of Mispa, and thou knowest
 The cause of that fight and its end.
 That thou should'st pay him drop for drop
 He does not wish, spite of the scar
 That always burns and pains his head.

He laughs a short, rough laugh.

When he lies on his bed he hears
 The women weeping and lamenting

Not for him, no, but for the shepherd
 Enchanted by a sorceress,
 Upon the mountain far away.
 My woman, surely, thou choosest ill,
 And now I have not much to say,
 But thou 'lt go with me, and no need,
 Daughter of Jorio, of more words.
 Down there I've ass and pack-saddle,
 A cord of hemp I also have,
 And one of rushes. God be praised!

*Mila remains motionless, with her back to
 the rock, without answering.*

Mila di Codra, dost thou hear?
 Or art thou turning deaf and dumb?
 Now I speak to thee peaceably;
 I know well how it was that time
 With the reapers of Norca, there below.
 If now thou thinkest by the same defence
 To stand against me, thou dost trick
 thyself.

There is no hearthstone here; there are
 No kinsfolk; nor does San Giovanni
 Ring the great bell to keep thee safe.
 I move three steps and have thee fast.
 Besides, I've two strong fellows here.

Yet, none the less, I speak in peace,
 'Tis better thou should'st yield to this,
 And not compel me to use force.

Mila:

What would'st thou with me? Thou
 dost come,
 Now, when death is already here.
 Death moved aside to let thee in,
 But she remains there none the less.
 Look in that sack. In it there are
 Roots that would kill a dozen wolves.
 Though thou, thyself, bind up my jaw,
 I shall be chewing poison sweet
 Just as a heifer chews its cud.
 Take me then, me, when I am cold,
 Put me across the saddle, bound
 Fast with thy cords and take me down
 With the ass, and bring me to the judge
 And say: "Here is the shameless one,
 The Sorceress!" And burn my corpse,
 And let thy women come to look,
 Rejoicing over me. Perhaps
 One will reach out and put her hand
 In the flame, and without burning it,
 To draw my heart forth from the fire.

Lazaro, at the first suggestion, gathers up the sack of simples and scrutinizes it. He throws it behind him with fear and disgust.

Lazaro:

Ah, thou dost try to spread a snare for me.

Thou seekest to entrap me, who knows how?

I hear deceit sound in thy voice.

But I will take thee in my noose.

He makes a noose with his cord.

Lazaro will have thee by God's grace,
Will have thee neither cold nor dead.

Mila di Codra, he will tread

The vintage with thee this October.

His wine vats are already waiting,

And he will tread the grapes with thee

And wallow to his neck in must.

He goes toward the woman, smiling slyly.

Mila crouches ready to fly. The man follows her. She leaps here and there but cannot escape.

Mila:

Don't touch me! Let me go! for shame!
Thy son is there, behind thee, there!

SCENE 7

Aligi appears on the threshold. Seeing his father he loses every trace of color. Lazaro stops and turns on him. Father and son look at each other fixedly.

Lazaro:

Who is it? Who is it? Aligi?

Aligi:

Father, however did you come?

Lazaro:

Is thy blood sucked? that thou art grown
So white? It runs as if strained thin
As whey when it runs through the bag,
Shepherd, thou art so terrified.

Aligi:

What, Father, is thy will to do?

Lazaro:

My will to do? To ask
Of me is not permitted thee.

But I will tell thee that I want
To take the fat sheep in my noose
And take her with me where I please.
Then I will settle with the shepherd.

Aligi:

Father, father, thou shalt not do this.

Lazaro:

Dost dare to lift thy face against me?
Take care I do not make thee blush.
Go, go back to the hut and stay
There with thy flock inside the fold
Until I come and look for thee.
Now for thy very life obey!

Aligi:

O Father, may the Lord forbid
I should obey thee in this thing.
Thou hast the power to judge thy son,
But leave this woman to herself;
Leave her, leave her to weep alone.
Do not offend her. It is sin.

Lazaro:

Now God has made thee go clean mad!
Is it a saint of whom thou speakest?
Dost thou not see (thine eyes were shut),

Can'st thou not see she has beneath
 Her eyelids and about her neck
 All of the seven deadly sins?
 I tell the truth that if thy sheep
 Should see her they would butt at her.
 Dost thou dare bid me not offend her!

* * * * *

Aligi:

If before God it were not sin,
 If before man it were not crime,
 My father, I would say to thee
 That thou hast lied now in thy throat.

*He takes a few steps slantwise and places
 himself between his father and the
 woman, covering her with his body.*

Lazaro:

What dost thou say? May thy tongue
 wither!
 Get down upon thy knees and beg
 Pardon, and fall upon the ground,
 And do not dare to stand again
 Before me, but crawl forth,
 Away, and stay there with the dogs.

Aligi:

My father, let God be our judge;
But this poor creature to thy rage
I will not leave, I cannot
While I live. Let God be judge.

Lazaro:

'T is I who am thy judge. Now who
Am I to thee, and to thy blood?

Aligi:

Thou art my father, dear to me.

Lazaro:

I am thy father, and can do
Exactly what I please with thee.
Thou art mine as much as is the ox
In my stall; thou art like my spade
And like my hoe. And if I choose
To drive the harrow over thee
And break thy back, it is well done.
And if I need for my knife here
A handle and should make me one
Out of thy thigh, that is well done;
Because I'm father and thou son,
Dost understand? For over thee
I've all power, to the end of time.

And just as I was to my father
 Thou art to me though dead and buried!
 Dost understand? And if this goes
 Out of thy head, I 'll bring it back
 To mind. Down on thy knees, and
 kiss
 The earth and creep out on all fours;
 Go, and don't turn to look behind.

Aligi:

Drive over me with plough and harrow,
 Father, but do not touch the woman.

*Lazaro comes near, unable to contain his
 fury; and, lifting the cord, strikes him
 on the shoulder.*

Lazaro:

Down, get thee down to the ground, dog,
 down!

Aligi falls on his knees.

Aligi:

My father, see me ; here I kneel
 Before thee, kneel, and kiss the earth.
 And in the name of the living God
 And true, by my first cry, then when

I was born to thee and thou didst take
 Me in your hands and lifted me,
 Ere I was wrapped in swaddling bands,
 Up toward the Holy Face of Christ,
 I pray thee, pray thee, father mine;
 Do not so trample under foot
 The heart, the heart of thy sad son,
 Nor give him shame like this. I pray
 Do not put out his light of life,
 Nor throw him to the host of fiends,
 To the enemy that circles round.
 I pray thee by that Angel mute
 That sees and hears there in the block!

Lazaro:

Go now, go now, begone, begone,
 And afterward I'll judge thy case.
 Begone, I say, begone, begone from here.

*He strikes him cruelly with the cord. Aligi
 raises himself all trembling.*

Aligi:

Now may the Lord be judge, and judge
 Between us two, and see, and do
 Me right; but I, against thee here,
 Father, I will not lift my hand.

Lazaro:

Accursèd! I will strangle thee!

He throws the noose to catch Aligi by the head, but Aligi avoids the catch, seizes the cord and pulls his father with a sudden jerk.

Aligi:

Lord Christ, do thou give aid to me!
That I lay not my hands on him,
That I touch not my father, no!

Furious, Lazaro runs to the threshold calling.

Lazaro:

Ho, Jenne! Ho you, Femo! Come!
Come, come and see this fellow here,
How he acts. (May a serpent sting him!)
Bring here the cord. He is possessed
For certain. See, he threatens me his
father!

He has rebelled against me, he!
He was accursèd in the womb,
And all his days, accursed forever.
The devil has entered into him.
Look at him there. There is no blood
In his face. Ho, Jenne, take him, thou.

Femo, thou hast the cord. So, bind
him.

Now bind him fast, and throw him out.

* * * * *

Aligi:

Brothers in God, don't treat me so!

Oh, Jenne, do not lose thy soul.

Jenne, I know thee. I remember

How when I was a little child

I used to go and gather olives

In thy field, Jenne dell' Eta.

Yes, I remember. Do not, Jenne,

Do not abuse and shame me so!

*The peasants throw him down and try to
bind him, dragging him about while he
becomes furious.*

Dogs! May you die of pestilence!

No, no, no, Mila, Mila, run,

Give me that iron there. Mila! Mila!

*His voice is heard hoarse and desperate,
while Lazaro prevents Mila's escape.*

Mila:

Aligi, Aligi, God will help!

God will avenge! Do not despair.

I have no power, and thou hast none.

But while my heart is left to me,
 Aligi, I am thine, am thine!
 Have faith! have faith! For aid will
 come.
 Take heart, Aligi. May God help thee!

SCENE 8

Mila remains with eyes fixed, and ear strained to hear the voices. In the brief truce, Lazaro examines the cave, slyly. Far off is heard the song of another company of pilgrims passing through the valley.

Lazaro:

So, woman, thou hast seen how I
 Am master here. I give the law.
 And now thou art alone with me.
 Evening begins, and here, inside,
 'Tis almost dark as night. Don't fear,
 Don't be afraid, Mila di Codra.

* * * * *

Here in the shepherd's hut thou could'st
 Not have fat pasture. Down below
 Upon the plain thou canst have better,
 For Lazaro di Roio, he

Is well to do, Mila, is rich!
What art thou looking at, expecting?

Mila:

I look for nothing. No one comes.

She watches in the hope of seeing Ornella appear to save her. She dissimulates and temporizes, seeking to deceive the man.

Lazaro:

Thou art alone with me. Don't fear.
Don't fear. Art thou convinced, Mila?

Mila:

Lazaro di Roio, I am thinking.
I think what thou didst promise me. —
I think. But how can I be sure?

Lazaro:

Don't shrink away. I will keep my word.
All that I promise I will do,
If God will prosper me. — Come here.

Mila:

And Candia della Leonessa?

* * * * *

And thy three daughters in the house?

Lazaro:

Come here. Don't doubt me. Here,
look here:

I've twenty ducats sewed up safe,
Sewed in this skin. Dost thou want
them?

There, hark! dost thou not hear them
ring?

Twenty good ducats of pure silver.

Mila:

I want to see them first. I want
To count them, Lazaro di Roio.
I'll take scissors and rip them out.

Lazaro:

What dost thou stare at? Witch, for cer-
tain

Thou dost plan some trick to cheat me
here.

Thou think'st to keep me dallying so.

*He tries to take her. The woman flees into
the shadow, and takes refuge near the
walnut block.*

Mila:

No! No! Let me alone! No! No!

Don't touch me! See! she comes! she comes!

Thy daughter comes! Ornella comes.

She grasps the Angel, despairingly, to resist the man's violence.

No! No! Ornella! Ornella, help!

Suddenly, at the mouth of the cave, appears Aligi, unbound. He sees the confusion back in the shadow. He throws himself upon his father. He sees where the light strikes the walnut block, the hatchet still fixed. He brandishes it, blind with horror.

Aligi :

Let her go, quick, upon thy life!

He strikes his father dead. Ornella arrives; she sees the body stretched at the Angel's feet. She gives a great cry.

Ornella :

I let him go! I let him go!

ACT III

A great threshing floor. At the back an old oak, behind it the open country bounded by mountains, the river between. At the left, the house of Lazaro. The door stands wide; under the porch are harvest tools; at the right, the hay-loft and straw-rick.

SCENE I

The corpse of Lazaro lies on the bare floor within the house, his head pillowed upon a faggot of vine branches, as is the custom. The mourners kneel around. Under the porch are the kinsfolk with Splendore and Favetta. Vienda is seated upon a stone as if half dead, comforted by her mother and godmother. Ornella stands alone under the tree, watching the path.

The chorus of mourners laments the death of Lazaro. Ornella, watching, sees far off a cloud of dust and a black standard. She calls to her sisters to prepare their mother for

what is coming. Femo, one of the peasant witnesses, rushing in breathless, brings tidings of Aligi, condemned as a parricide, and now being led to his mother that he may ask her pardon before he dies, and that she may give him, as is her right, the cup of comfort. Afterward, his hand is to be cut off, and he is to be tied in a sack with a mastiff and thrown into the river. The muffled roll of the funeral drum is heard. Femo tells how Aligi confessed his guilt, looking humble and innocent, and how the carved angel has a spot of blood upon it. The women crowd around asking what has become of Mila and cursing her. As the chorus of mourners breaks forth again, the mother rises from the chimney corner where she has been crouching, and approaches the door.

SCENE 2

The mother wanders in her mind, confusing her sorrows with those of the Blessed Virgin. The frightened women kneel in prayer. The daughters try to bring their mother back. Ornella cries: "Mother, Aligi

is coming, Aligi is coming now to ask thy forgiveness and to drink the cup of comfort from thy hands. Rise, and be strong. He is not damned. By repentance and the sacred blood he is saved."

A crowd of people, all the countryside, approaches in silence, Iona di Midia bearing the black standard. In the midst is Aligi, bound, bare-foot, a black veil over his head. They bring with them the angel, the leathern sack, and the dog. The kinswomen, mourning, tell how to mix the wine with herbs to make the cup more stupefying. The voice of Iona breaks the silence: "O widow of Lazaro, O kinsfolk of this stricken household, up, up, here comes the penitent."

SCENE 3

Iona appears with the black standard; behind him is Aligi, bound. Following them is a man carrying the carved shepherd's crook, another with the hatchet, and others bearing the angel figure, wrapped in a cloth. They set it down. The crowd presses close.

The chorus of mourners laments the terrible death of Aligi, now so near, the cut-off hand, the cord, the sack. Iona announces the condemnation of Aligi, and tells Candia that she may lift the veil and hold the cup to the lips of her son, because his death will be so bitter. Aligi falls at her feet: he may no longer call her mother, he will not drink her cup, for his death is no more painful than he deserves. The crowd looks pityingly upon the mother, grown white-haired in two nights. Aligi addresses his sisters: he must not speak their names nor call them sisters any more. They ought to drive him away like a dog. He has two things to leave them, the crook on which he had carved three little maidens like them, that he might have their company out in the pastures, and the mute angel he had been carving from his heart, now with the awful spot upon it. "The spot will disappear some day and the mute angel will speak, and you will see and hear." The crowd looks pityingly on the sisters who have no more tears to shed.

Aligi speaks to Vienda, "virgin and

widow, whose next marriage shall be in Paradise and Christ shall be the bridegroom." The crowd echoes his words. Iona hurries him, for it grows late, and "he must not hear the Ave Maria nor see the evening star." The mother, approaching, lifts the veil from Aligi's face, presses his head against her breast and holds the cup to his lips. A cry is heard from the crowd, interrupting the Miserere: "Mila di Codra, the daughter of Jorio, the witch of hell, is coming. Let her come on; make place."

LAST SCENE

Mila di Codra rushes in, parting the crowd. She calls upon them all to listen. Aligi is innocent, she says, it is she who killed Lazaro. Aligi does not know this for she has bewitched him. She has brought many evils upon them all, as the woman knows who accused her on the eve of San Giovanni. She made Aligi carve a bad angel, that one there, covered with the cloth. The Saint of the Mountains has turned her heart, and has sent her to confess and to save

the innocent. Aligi at first denies all this, tells her that she is lying, and calls on Ornella to witness. "Do not listen to her. She is misleading you. When all of you cried out against her on the eve of San Giovanni I saw the mute angel behind her. With these mortal eyes of mine which must not see again the vesper star, I saw it look at me and weep. It was a miracle, Iona, to show that she is of God."

Mila replies: "O poor shepherd Aligi, O youth so credulous and so deceived, the angel was apostate. 'Twas a wicked, a false angel." All sign themselves except Aligi in his bonds and Ornella who stands apart, her eyes fixed upon the voluntary victim. Mila tells how, when Aligi came to the fold, she made him carve the bad angel, that one there, covered with the cloth, and how, when Lazaro seized her, that night in the dark hut, great power came upon her; she drew the hatchet from the block, brandished it and killed him. The kinsfolk cry out against her: "Let her alone, Ornella. Aligi is innocent. Take off his bonds, Iona. Let him go free." The crowd takes up the cry

and adds: "To the flames, to the flames with the witch, the daughter of Jorio." Mila replies: "Yes, yes, righteous people, people of God, take vengeance on me. And add to the pyre that apostate angel. Let it make the flame to burn me and be consumed with me."

Aligi, more and more overpowered by the potion, cries out desperately: if it is he who heard, who believed, who hoped, who adored the wicked angel, let them cut off both his hands, and sew him into the sack and cast him into the river, that he may sleep seven hundred years and never remember how the light of God illumined those eyes. Ornella cries: "Mila, Mila, it is the mixed wine, the cup of comfort that his mother gave him." Aligi, as he is unbound, calls still more wildly on all the dead and the forgotten to curse her, and Mila answers with a tortured cry: "Aligi, no, not thou. Thou shouldest not, thou must not."

Aligi falls in his mother's arms. The thongs are put upon Mila, the black veil on her head; the black standard is raised once more, and she is led away. Ornella calls to

her: "Mila, Mila, my sister in Christ, I kiss thy feet as they go." And Mila, from the midst of the mocking throng, is heard: "The flame is beautiful, the flame is beautiful."

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